



THE INDEPENDENT

ON SATURDAY

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The Greatest?

Today England face the All Blacks. Are they the greatest rugby team of all time? (And, no, we don't mean England.)

See Chris Hewett, Time Off, page 24

Army scientists kill 11,000 animals a year



Sitting target: Rhesus monkeys were shot above the eye in experiments at the Porton Down base. Photograph: P Kumar/Planet Earth

The Government has made much of its long-awaited ban on the use of animals in cosmetic testing. But less has been heard about the huge increase in the number used in military experiments – one which looks set to grow further.

The number of animals used and destroyed during military testing, including those subjected to nerve gases and "battle injuries" has more than doubled since 1992, *The Independent* has discovered.

Last year 11,221 procedures were carried out on animals, including marmosets, pigs, rabbits, Rhesus monkeys, sheep, goats, guinea pigs, rats and mice, by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (Dera), based at Porton Down. This compares with 4,500 procedures in 1992.

Previous experiments have included anaesthetised pigs being strapped onto trolleys and subjected to blasts at close range to test body armour. Monkeys were shot above the eye to investigate the effects of high velocity missiles on brain tissue.

Despite a public outcry, similar experiments may still be continuing. A programme involving officers from the Defence Medical Services which conducts "research into the management of battle injury and trauma" has so far this year used 46 pigs, 14 sheep and eight rabbits.

The growth of the tests was revealed in a written answer to Paul Flynn, Labour MP

for Newport West, from John Chisholm, chief executive of Dera, which states that the animal tests are "aimed at providing the armed forces with safe and effective protection against specific operational hazards".

Mr Chisholm declines to list the procedures to which it subjects the animals but Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, has established that Dera holds 36 separate project licenses for animal testing, of which six were classified as "substantial" – MoD-speak for procedures involving the greatest level of pain that can be inflicted under the law.

The agency's own figures show that tests

using rodents, but ultimately ... it will also be necessary to use monkeys.

In Labour's pre-election policy statement the party said it would "forbid the use of animals in the testing of and development of weapons". But critics, including Mr Baker, say this commitment is not what it seems.

"What they're basically saying is it's business as normal at Dera," he said. "The Government are making a distinction between experiments designed to test bullets, explosives and so on, and those to test antidotes to biological and chemical weapons," said Andrew Tyler, of the pressure group Animal Aid, which two years ago launched a campaign called No Defence. "But there is no difference. They all involve enormous suffering and death and all claim some sort of 'defensive' purpose."

In a separate letter obtained by *The Independent*, Dera explains the increase by saying: "As a result of the increasing potential biological warfare threat it has been recognised that the UK's biological defence capability must be strengthened. This has required the use of more animal studies."

It adds that such studies are only performed "when careful consideration of alternative methods to the use of animals has shown that there is no adequate substitute."

But the efficacy of such tests has been criticised by groups such as Animal Aid, which says that humans under battle conditions may not react in the same way as animals. They point to a US Defence Department statement that recent animal studies cannot explain symptoms suffered by its troops returning from the Gulf War.

EXCLUSIVE BY JOJO MOYES

on animals have risen steadily from 4,500 in 1992, to 8,700 in 1995 and 11,221 last year. Mr Flynn said he was "horrified" by the increase, and was seeking an urgent debate into the matter.

The use of animals in such projects looks set to surge, with the Government's announcement in July of "Gulf Veterans' Illnesses: A New Beginning" – a £2.5m research programme into the effects of vaccines and tablets given during the Gulf War.

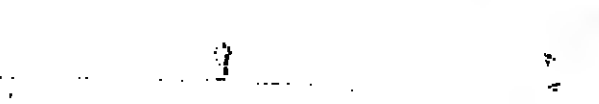
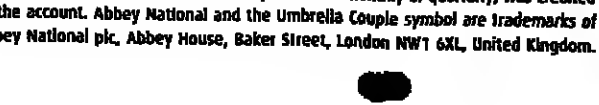
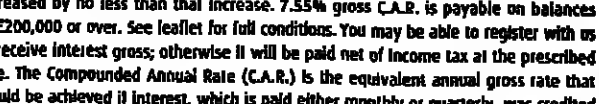
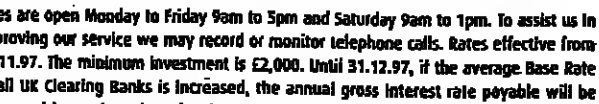
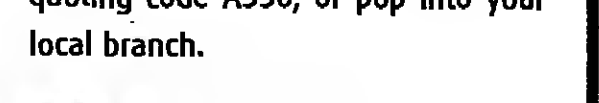
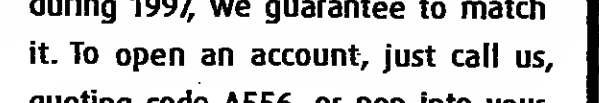
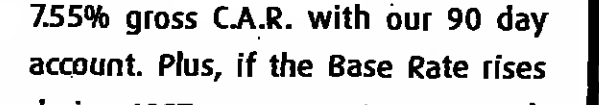
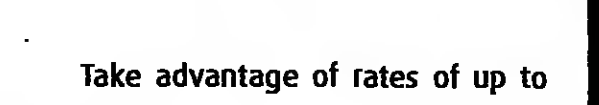
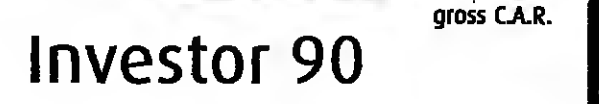
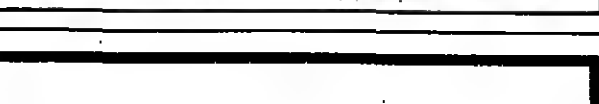
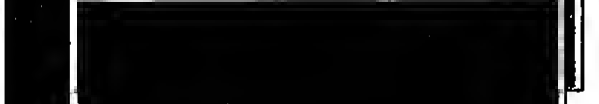
The Government's plans for the programme state: "The research will require tests to be carried out on animals, initially

Reader offer

Royal Opera 2 for 1, save up to £75 pg 32



INSIDE YOUR FIVE SECTION PAPER



TODAY'S NEWS

Tory misery as MP quits

Following two poor by-election results, in which the Conservatives held on to Bockenham with a reduced majority and lost Winchester to the Liberal Democrats by 21,000 votes, another Tory MP left the party to sit as an independent in the Commons.

Peter Temple-Morris, the Leominster MP and a strong pro-European, was provoked into resigning after the party leader, William Hague, had unexpectedly withdrawn the whip from him. This was seen as a bad own-goal on Mr Hague's part by other Tory moderates: the former deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine, publicly rebuked the party's new leader. Labour, meanwhile, denounced Mr Hague as "bonkers".

Politics, page 15

Public school porn raids

Two public schools – Durham School and Sedburgh School in Cumbria – were among the 15 places raided by police yesterday as part of a co-ordinated operation against a child pornography ring. Videos, computer equipment and letters were confiscated, before being checked to discover whether they contained child pornography. Three teachers are believed to be involved in the inquiry after a three-year investigation. There were no arrests. Page 4

Masons must own up

Freemasons joining the police, crown prosecution service and becoming magistrates, will be forced to declare their membership of the secret society under plans being drawn up by the Government. We have learned that a compulsory register is expected to be proposed later this month by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary. Page 3; Editorial, page 24

Young Britain talks back

After a week of reports about the attitudes and hopes of Britons in their teens and early 20s, our younger readers respond, suggesting that those surveyed are boring, or flaky, or arrogant. One criticises Swampy as a Luddite; another demands a return to the traditional younger values of "sex, drugs and rock'n'roll". Hamish McRae, author of a book on the world in 2020, concludes that it all points to a Britain which is becoming 'economically American, but socially more like the rest of Europe. Page 18

Remember them?

Knock, knock. Who's there? The Spice Girls. The Spice Girls who? That's showbiz.

On page 23, we ask whether the bubble has burst for the girls, and how they can rescue their careers.



WEATHER Time Off, page 2
TELEVISION The Eye
CROSSWORDS Time Off, pages 16 and 26
Web address: <http://www.independent.co.uk>

Star 'dies', is revived and then has to face Chris Evans

The sentiments expressed by the "TFI" in Chris Evans' *TFI Friday* show last night had never been more appropriate.

A wave of shock had paralysed the music industry with the news yesterday that Paul Weller, one of its biggest and most popular artists, had died – until everyone realised it was Friday.

That is the day when a tiny minority of bored, and sometimes malicious, industry

insiders have traditionally chosen to start rumours. And, to the relief of music lovers everywhere, the one that swept through the business like wildfire yesterday turned out, like so many others, to be false.

A television company, four newspapers and *Music Week* magazine had been targeted by the hoaxers before *Island Records* were able, angrily, to scotch the rumour. While

staff at *Island* and at *Independiente* music, whose management team includes some of Weller's closest friends, were reduced to tears by calls from journalists about the rumour, the musician was safe and well at the east London studio of *TFI Friday*, rehearsing for last night's show.

Within minutes, the hoaxers struck again, this time claiming that Gary

Glitter was dead. Again, check calls were made, and, again, the rumour was denied by his management team. Once, at the Reading Festival, similar rumours circulated about Cliff Richard – but there have been many others.

"This sort of thing always seems to happen on a Friday," said Selina Webb, editor of *Music Week*. "A while ago a rumour went round that Mick Jones of the

Clash was dead – and, thankfully, he wasn't. Before that, it was Billy Bragg, and he was all right too.

"The problem is, the rumours fly around so fast, and, until they can be reliably checked out, an awful lot of people get very upset. No one knows who starts the rumours, but they simply aren't funny."

The music business was also involved in one of the

most damaging rumours ever to sweep a stock exchange when, in 1987, share prices in Tokyo crashed on the news that Ronald Reagan had suffered a heart attack.

Despite repeated denials from the White House, stock went into free fall until it became clear that the person struck down was not Ronnie, the ageing president, but Lonnice Donegan, the Sixties skiffle star.

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COLUMN ONE

Love and affection in the classroom

Teachers could be forgiven for feeling confused. One minute, a teaching union is advising them to "bash and dash" when confronted with a violent pupil or parent.

The next, an earnest group of liberal thinkers is urging them to help children get in touch with their feelings and "find ways of attending to the messages that lie behind aggressive and anti-social behaviour".

For those who prefer not to treat their job as a Gladiators-style challenge, the second option - from an organisation called Antidote - may prove the more promising approach.

Set up two years ago to promote "emotional literacy" among the repressed British, Antidote has now turned its attention to schools with a report titled "Realising the potential - emotional education for all".

Battle-hardened teachers used to a life of bashing and dashing might find the proposals a trifle, well, Californian. Faced with a class of truculent 14-year-olds on a Friday afternoon, how many would be concentrating on "shifting the blocks that might prevent them from tuning in to the emotions being experienced by their pupils"?

Antidote's members, it must be admitted, include more than a few names from the intellectual luvvie set, notably barrister Helena Kennedy QC, psychotherapist Susie Orbach (pictured) - who confesses to being "rather unsuccessfully schooled", Carmen Callil - founder of the women's publishing house Virago, and New Labour MP Patricia Hewitt. Financial assistance for the report, launched yesterday in highly un-Californian rainy central London, came from the Body Shop Foundation.

The group's "strategy for emotional literacy" would see a redesign of the National Curriculum to include "a focus on enabling young people to understand what they are feeling, and how emotions influence their thinking as well as their values". Teachers, meanwhile,

would be provided with more "opportunities to develop their capacity to understand why children and young people behave as they do - particularly how fear, anxiety or distress come to be reflected in withdrawn or difficult behaviour".

Not only that, says the report, put-upon staff "need to have their own needs recognised and met". They can only do so "if they feel valued and supported by society at large, and if they are given opportunities to share their feelings and experiences with fellow members of the school team".

Antidote's founders believe these are ideas whose time has come. Headteachers have flocked to the organisation's conferences.

Could the daily literacy hour, recommended for all primary schools, be followed by an emotional literacy hour, in which pupils would be encouraged to get to grips with their feelings for their Tamagotchi? Antidote's members will have none of such silliness. Taking emotional literacy seriously, they insist, will bring a host of benefits for young people, ranging from a fall in bullying, fewer exclusions, less alcohol addiction and more satisfying relationships. Which is more than can be said for bashing and dashing.

— Lucy Ward

Warrington bomb

We apologise for the incorrect use in yesterday's final edition of a photograph of the Warrington IRA bombing, which killed two young boys, to illustrate an article about the IRA gasworks bombing in the same town.

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PEOPLE



Gong Li becomes the face of L'Oreal

The actress Gong Li, above, is to be the new face of L'Oreal in China, where the French cosmetics company is experiencing its fastest growth worldwide.

In February, L'Oreal set up a branch of the company in Peking to supply their products to the burgeoning market in China. In just six months, the firm's make-up, perfume, and skin products have proved so popular with the Communist Chinese that business is growing faster than any of its other markets worldwide.

Just how much Gong Li's contract to promote L'Oreal products is worth is unknown, but the gigantic billboard of the actress in Peking - 40 metres by 15 - is one of China's largest.

The Chinese actress is best known for her work with Chinese director Zhang Yimou, for whom she appeared in *Raise the Red Lantern*, *Judou* and *Shang-hai Triad* which was shown at the Cannes Film Festival. But it was *Farewell My Concubine* which brought Gong Li to the attention of Hollywood. The film was the joint winner (with *The Piano*) of the prestigious Palme d'Or award at the Cannes Festival. But, ironically, it was originally banned in China and only released when the film's director agreed to cut the pivotal scene of the Sixties Cultural Revolution.

Gong Li recently played opposite Jeremy Irons in Wayne Wang's *Chinese Box*. The film, due out this autumn, depicts the story of a British journalist in Hong Kong who becomes involved with an ex-bar girl as the colony is handed over to China.

Acclaimed for her beauty and mystique, the actress is regarded as the muse of famed Hong Kong designer and retailer Shanghai Tang.

— Louise Hancock

Lawyer lied to protect police officer

A lover's quarrel ended the career of a respected solicitor yesterday, when she was convicted of perverting the course of justice by lying to protect her policeman boyfriend from a drink drive charge.

Penelope Schofield, pictured, a 35-year-old lawyer from Hampshire falsely claimed she was behind the wheel of her partner, Nigel Phillips's car - when he drove home after a CID Christmas party.

But she had left earlier by taxi after rowing with the drunken detective, because he was "wrapped round" another woman at the party.

Schofield stormed out and demanded that a taxi should take her home alone. The couple were still arguing when taxi driver Stephen Garner arrived.

"She cried during the journey. It was difficult to sit next to someone crying, so I tried to make conversation," he said.

"She told me she was a solicitor and high up in the field. She said she had been at a police function."

The driver dropped her safely

at home. But her boyfriend had returned to the party where he stayed drinking and dancing. He was seen with his arms round another woman.

The officer was nearly three times over the legal limit when he decided to drive away from the party back to the cottage he shared with Schofield.

On the way hit the kerb, causing a puncture, then drove to Bitterne police station where he was based. Officers there promptly breathalysed him. Facing a drink-drive charge, Phillips rang Schofield and begged her to lie for him and say she was behind the wheel.

She told police later: "In a moment of madness, when I agreed to say that I had driven, I lost everything - my career, my job with the Crown Prosecution Service and it is likely that I will be struck off by the Law Society."

Schofield has since broken off her relationship with the disgraced detective.

The daughter of a respected retired solicitor, she was highly regarded by other lawyers. A sheaf of testimonies spoke of her as an



"honourable person of complete integrity", "fair" and "held in high esteem".

"I have worked hard for that qualification and my whole life has revolved around the legal profession. I am ashamed of what I did and the shame that it has brought on my family. I did it for Nigel, out of stupidity, without thinking of the consequences," she said. Schofield was remanded on bail for pre-sentence reports.

— Jojo Moyes

UPDATE

EDUCATION

University let down students

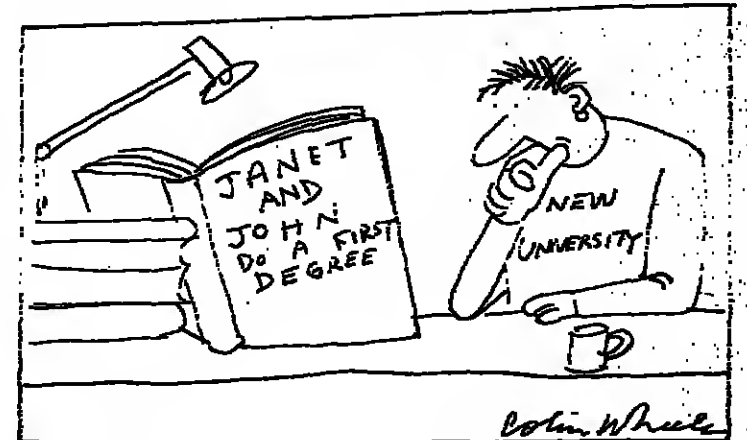
A new university accused of "dumbing down" degrees in order to pass students has been cleared of deliberately lowering standards but found to have serious administrative and other problems.

Higher education quality watchdogs concluded that standards at Thames Valley University could have been "compromised by administrative failures". In a few subject areas, the Quality Assurance Agency found, weaker students may have fallen below the standards expected of a graduate.

The QAA launched an investigation at the university, based in Basingstoke, after a Sunday newspaper published allegations of a deliberate policy of lowering standards.

The inquiry found that in many areas of the university teaching was good and learning effective. However, there were serious problems of staff morale and industrial relations, which had damaged student support.

— Lucy Ward



PROPERTY

House prices too volatile for Europe

Taxes on house sales and property ownership should be raised to help the UK join a single European currency, according to a report published yesterday. The rollercoaster rise and fall of house prices could make it difficult for Britain to take part in the project, the Economic and Social Research Council said.

It recommended a package of measures including an "automatic" tax on sharp rises in the value of a home and higher stamp duty. The volatility of the market - from the 1980s boom through the 1990s crash and the latest surge - is driven by the high level of borrowing allowed by lenders and low transaction costs, it found.

The authors of the ESRC report, Professor John Muellbauer and Dr Anthony Murphy, said reforms such as higher stamp duty, tougher controls on lenders, and a "significant property tax" could make it easier for the UK to join economic and monetary union (EMU).

HEALTH

Cancer patients beat fatigue

Cancer patients could soon be able to beat fatigue - thanks to pioneering new research. Nine out of 10 people having chemotherapy will experience chronic tiredness - an unpleasant side effect which affects their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. Most radiotherapy patients also suffer from the condition.

A team of nurses at King's College, London, led by Dr Alison Richardson, is working to discover if a self-help programme called Beating Fatigue can help. The Beating Fatigue programme aims to help patients tackle fatigue by teaching them different ways of managing it. The strategies include relaxation, light exercise and enjoying good hobbies.

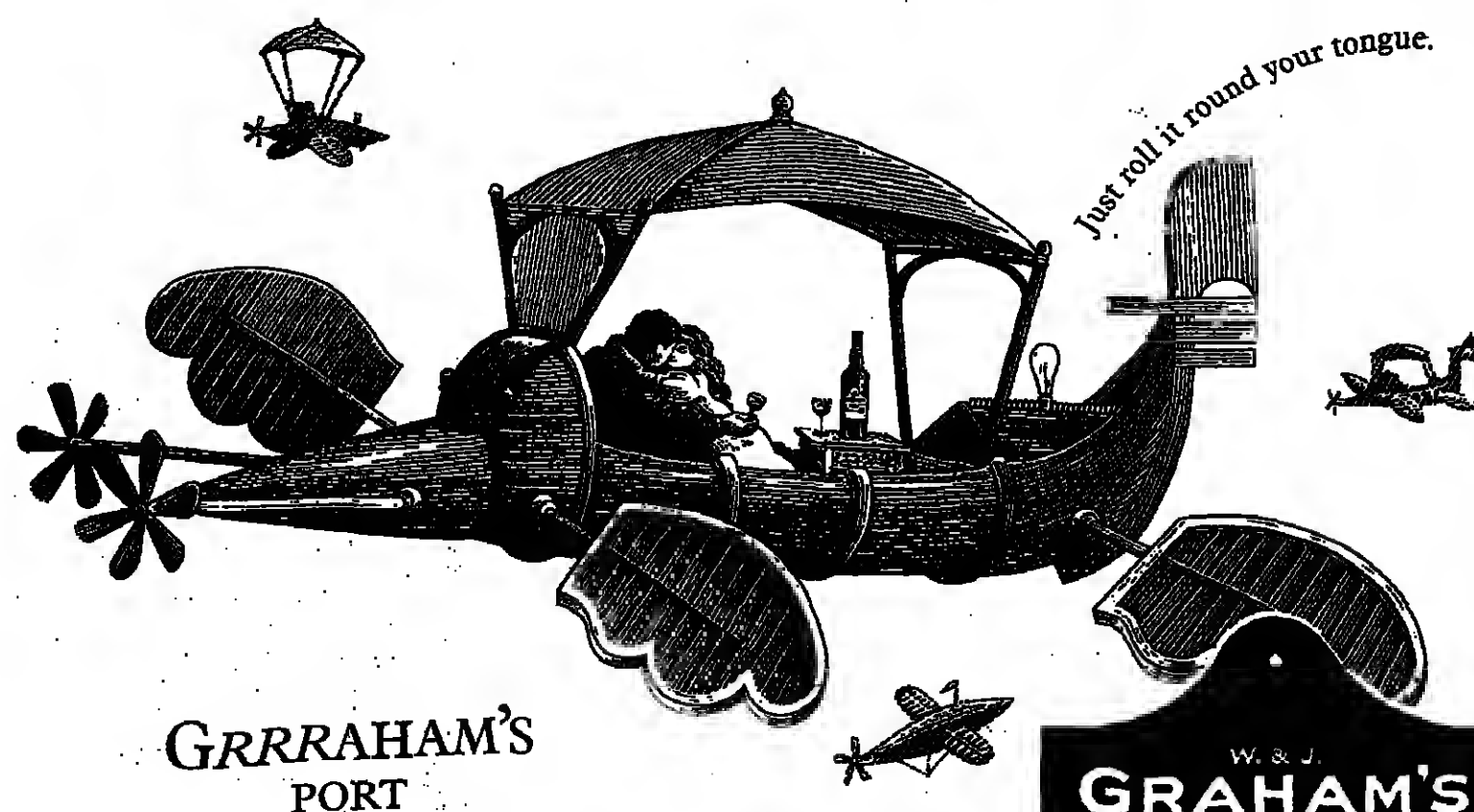
"Fatigue is experienced by different patients in different ways, but it will always interfere with a person's ability to just get on with life as normal," explained Dr Richardson, a researcher for the Cancer Research Campaign.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.35	Italy (lira)	2.83
Austria (schillings)	20.07	Japan (yen)	210.32
Belgium (francs)	59.00	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.33	Netherlands (guilders)	3.21
Cyprus (pounds)	0.83	Norway (kroner)	11.69
Denmark (kroner)	10.94	Portugal (escudos)	290.35
France (francs)	9.55	Spain (pesetas)	240.59
Germany (marks)	2.86	Sweden (kroner)	12.53
Greece (drachmes)	456.06	Switzerland (francs)	2.32
Hong Kong (\$)	12.66	Turkey (lira)	311.078
Ireland (punts)	1.09	USA (\$)	1.64

Source: Thomson Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

GRRRASP THE MOMENT



ZITS

by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



3/LEADING STORIES

New judges and police told they must confess masonic links

Freemasons joining the police, Crown Prosecution Service and becoming magistrates will be forced to declare their membership of the secret society under plans being drawn up by the Government. Jason Bennett and Colin Brown reveal details of the changes and of a rearguard fight by the judiciary.

All new recruits to the criminal justice system, including police officers, will have to publicly reveal whether they are members of a secret society, such as the Freemasons.

The introduction of a compulsory register is expected to be proposed this month by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary. *The Independent* has learned.

It follows fears that the estimated 350,000 masons in Britain are abusing their membership of the "brotherhood" in courts and police stations.

Despite the changes for new appointments, existing members of the police and courts may escape the compulsory scheme — instead they could be asked to sign a voluntary register.

Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, is also arguing that a compulsory register for new judges is an infringement of privacy and individual rights of the judiciary and should therefore be excluded from any changes.

Under the expected proposals, conditions of employment will be altered and new appointments must reveal whether they are Freemasons. Anyone caught lying would face the sack.

The Home Secretary is still considering whether to force existing employees to declare whether they are Freemasons, but unlike new recruits this would need legislation and is therefore more difficult to introduce.

If they are excluded it will be seen by campaigners for greater openness as a Government U-turn. Labour

pledged in March to introduce a compulsory register. This followed a recommendation by the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee that month for a compulsory scheme for judges, magistrates, police officers and Crown Prosecutors.

Chris Mullin, Labour chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, said yesterday: "I recognise there's some potential difficulties and that there is bound to be resistance from the vested interests concerned, but I don't think they are insurmountable."

More than 30 judges have been identified from those listed as high-ranking or "grand" officers in the latest *Masonic Year Book*.

The select committee was also told that 14 of the 96 members of the discredited and now-disbanded West Midlands Serious Crime Squad who served between 1974 and 1989 were masons.

The Police Federation, which represents 120,000 rank and file officers in England and Wales, and the 8,500 Masonic lodges in England and Wales, oppose a compulsory register. However, chief constables, four or five of whom are believed to be masons, have given the scheme their full support.

Mr Straw's determination to act was reinforced by a case in his Blackburn constituency in which two businessmen entered a private function at a hotel which subsequently turned out to be a "ladies night" organised by Victory Lodge and at which a number of Lancashire police were present.

The men claimed that they were attacked and thrown out but the police prosecuted them for assault. A jury acquitted them both and they were paid damages.

Last month a Masonic police officer was found guilty of using confidential computer files to help a fellow mason trace his ex-wife's lover.

However, one major problem for Mr Straw is that he still has to overcome implacable opposition from the Lord Chancellor, who is holding out against a compulsory register.

Raunchy 'Chicago' divides critics on male-female lines

It is, wrote the critics, or some of them, a show to die for. "My kinda show", punned at least two headlines this week, taking a lyric from the old song.

Chicago, a Tony winner on Broadway, has become the hottest ticket in London in its opening week here. But the tale of high-kicking women prisoners in fishnet tights getting nightclub bookings as their criminal notoriety increases might yet earn a less comfortable footnote in musical history — the show that found a marked gender divide in appreciation.

Critics raving over the show have largely been male. Though not all have been convinced by any supposed insights into the justice system, nearly all praised the dancing and sexiness. The cast manage to "bump and grind their way through such sensationally erotic dance routines without getting arrested ... it's emphatically a musical for grown-ups and it offers entertainment at its most dangerously alluring," wrote Charles Spencer of the *Daily Telegraph*. A "highly intelligent, expertly choreographed revival" wrote Michael Billington in the *Guardian*.

But the bumping and grinding have struck some female viewers as less than alluring. Germaine Greer, who was at the first night, said: "I found it loathsome. First of all, I was worried by the whole loathsome plot, which implied that when broads kill guys they get away with it, which is precisely the opposite of the truth." She also told the BBC's *Late Review* that she "hated the style of dancing, the swivelling shoulders and pelvic kind of stuff."

Heather Noll, arts and literary editor of the *Times Educational Supplement*, said yesterday: "From the woman's point of view, if you take away

the attraction of female bodies writhing in fishnet tights, all that is left is the one irony of turning morality upside-down.

"I've got nothing against fishnet tights. But if they hadn't been sexy people, if they had just been people with good voices making this supposed argument about the justice system, if it had been a straight play, then you would have said it was very superficial."

Georgina Brown, theatre critic of the *Mail on Sunday*, added: "As a show it was incredibly slick, confident, sassy and cynical. But its methods were semi-pornographic. You can call it dancing, but actually it was stuff which would not be out of place in Raymond's Revue Bar. There was one moment when a male dancer had a girl doing the splits just under his chin. He could have had a view up to her tonsils."

"Its methods were crude, but it was set in a women's prison and women prisoners are not going to be subtle. It is a show about corruption and manipulation and those are the methods it uses to deliver its message. There was too much bumping and grinding to be sensual. But it was doing it all very knowingly and on its own terms. I don't accept the show dividing men and women. A lot of sensitive men would have felt uncomfortable."

Suzanne Wilford, former education officer with the English Shakespeare Company, said: "Often people in the theatre exploit stereotypes unnecessarily, and it offends people. And the offence extends beyond young women." Peter Thompson, spokesman for the producers of *Chicago*, said: "We simply don't accept this. Women in the first-night audience ranged from Baroness Thatcher to Dame Diana Rigg to Sabrina Guinness and they all adored it." — David Hester



Fishing for compliments. Members of the cast kicking up a storm. Photograph: Geraint Lewis

London's literati who can't bear to be apart

Ten directors at the Groucho Club, home from home for London's literati, have resigned en masse, but the club's managing director has refused to accept half the loss. Cathy Newman reports on board turmoil among the Groucho luminaries.

Tony Mackintosh, managing director, reinstated five of the directors who had offered to leave, but let another five go. Those who will no longer sit on the board, but will remain as consultants, include Rosie Boycott, editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, Liz Calder, publishing director of Bloomsbury Publishing, and Matthew Evans, chairman of Faber & Faber.

The fall-out occurred after the Soho-based Club appointed a consultant to assess the board structure. Mr Mackintosh said having 13 directors in total had made it difficult to take decisions. The consultant had recommended reducing the numbers on the board, and 10 directors came forward with their resignation letters. But Mr Mackintosh could not bear to part with five of the directors.

One of those retained is Blake Nixon, executive director at Guinness Peat Group, the stockbroker and fund manager, who will help the Groucho in its quest to develop commercially. It is to establish a permanent venue in Edinburgh shortly. Another who will stay on is William Sieghart, head of Forward Publishing.

Ms Boycott said last night: "I'm a great fan of the Groucho Club, and a great admirer of Tony Mackintosh. However, the location of Canary Wharf [where her newspaper and its daily sister paper are based in London's Docklands] has made attendance of the board meetings more than a bit erratic. I should like to be reconsidered for a directorship of the Groucho Club should the *Independent on Sunday* move its offices to Soho."

Such high drama at the Groucho is not unknown. Janet Street-Porter, the media person about town, created a stir back in 1993 by selling her shares in the club, which she had held since its foundation in 1984.



Members only: Eddie Izzard, a Groucho lobbyist, and Rosie Boycott, who will stay on as a consultant at the club

Chris Evans, the bad-boy DJ, has been known to drop in for one of his infamous drinking sessions. Other *habitués* include Liam Gallagher of Oasis, Eddie Izzard, the comedian.

However, despite the somewhat meretricious appearance of a number of the clientele, the Groucho does make a profit. Last year, it turned in pre-tax profits of £486,441, an increase of 16.5 per cent.

The story goes that, at a Frankfurt Book Fair 13 years ago, a troupe of London literary types — Michael Sissons, the literary agent, Carmen Calvi and Liz Calder, both publishers — decided to create a club to rival the Garrick, which did not take women members.

The name was in memory of Groucho Marx, who joked that he would not want to belong to a club that would accept him as a member. Attractions were to include a 24-hour bar and a 24-hour bookshop. A plan to put a jacuzzi on the roof was, surprisingly, scrapped.

French rail boss blames tardy trains on the trees

England, for some, appears to be a too green and pleasant land. Randeep Ramesh, *Transport Correspondent*, explains why a French rail boss wants to chop down the capital's trees.

Amoigne Hurel, the head of Connex — which owns two busy train commuter companies, has a reputation for smooth talking.

Despite this image, the normally urbane Frenchman managed to mouth *les mal mots* yesterday. In an interview M. Hurel claimed passengers should stop moaning about trains being delayed by leaves on the line and realise it was all their fault. If travellers wanted punctual services they would have to lose the trees.

"Is it so important, this attachment to trees, that we take the risk of delaying every year so many passengers?" fumed M. Hurel in the *London Evening Standard*.

Just in case anyone had missed the point, M. Hurel said: "There are too many trees. We are spending millions of pounds on spreading sand on the tracks just because we are not tackling the problem."

In so outburst designed to turn even Europhiles sceptic, he added Britain had the worst record in Europe for timekeeping as trains slipped on foliage. "This does not happen in other parts of Europe, only on a few branch lines." There was, he explained, a 10-metre strip alongside the tracks kept clear of trees.

Environmentalists were not impressed. Friends of the Earth said M. Hurel's views were "pathetic". Tony Juniper, FoE's campaign director, said: "I am very angry. Connex have failed to run a decent railway and it's a bit rich to blame it on the trees. The one certain thing for the railways is the arrival of autumn every year. They have had more than 150 years to sort the problem of leaves out and they haven't managed it."

M. Hurel's comments came after passengers throughout southern England experienced long delays because of leafy lines this week. Worryingly for M. Hurel, one of those delayed was Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott — who was attending a Beckenham by-election walk about.

Court frees man in military hacking case

The US Air Force said Matthew Bevan, 23, from Cardiff, was a hacker who posed a national security risk. The police said he was part of an international group of hackers. His wife said "I do" just 56 days after their first contact through an Internet "chatroom". And yesterday a judge said cleared him of three charges of "unauthorised access and modification" of computer files in the US.

Mr Bevan, who was arrested in June last year, was alleged by the USAF to have used the Net to access and alter sensitive research and development files at its Grifiths Air Force base near New York, and the Lockheed Space and Missile Company in California. After his arrest by British police in June last year, he was said to be part of a "phantom" - a worldwide Internet hacking group.

But yesterday Andrew Mitchell, for the Crown Prosecution Service, told Woolwich Crown Court that it was "no longer in the public interest" for an expensive and lengthy trial to take place. He said: "The court's hands are tied as to sentence and the

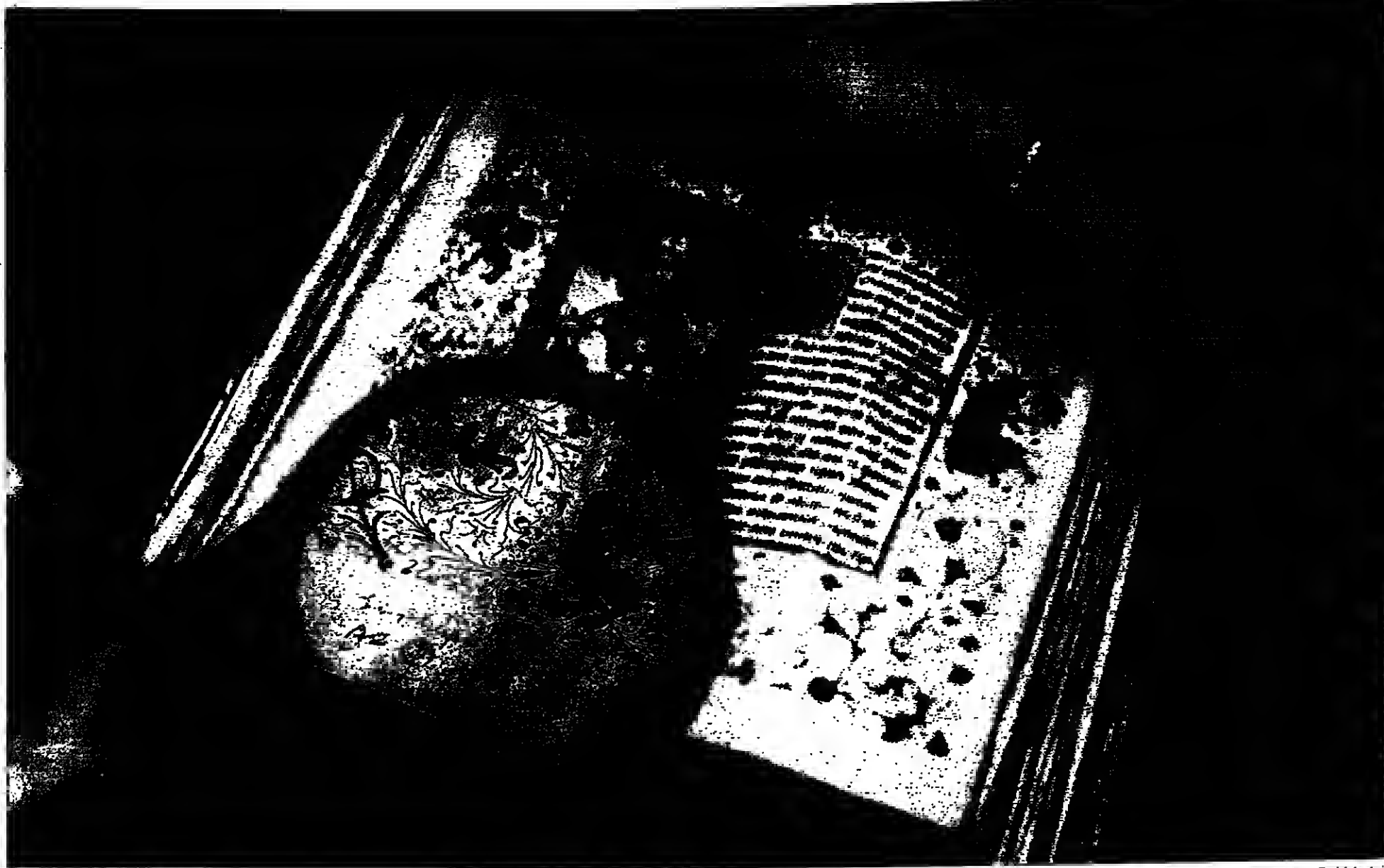
role of this defendant was secondary to that of another who was dealt with by a fine. Three not guilty verdicts were recorded.

Afterwards Mr Bevan, dressed in a black suit and sunglasses, refused to comment and was escorted away by two tabloid reporters.

He was initially arrested during a police investigation into the activities of Richard Price, a hacker who at the age of 16 was known as the "Datastream Cowboy" for having hacked into computers at Nasa and USAF bases. Earlier this year Mr Price was fined £1,200 for 12 offences. Detective Sergeant Simon James, from Scotland Yard's computer crime unit, said afterwards that the incident may have had "serious implications" and cost Lockheed and the USAF \$500,000 (£312,000) to sort out their computer systems.

Simon Evenden, Mr Bevan's solicitor, said: "He is delighted. He has been waiting for this for 17 months and can now put it all behind him."

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor



Words of wisdom: Anne Boleyn's book of hours, which Christie's is displaying in London before its auction, at which it is expected to fetch £300,000

Photograph: Rui Xavier

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Public schools raided in child porn inquiry

Police have raided a suspected national child pornography ring, which could include several teachers. Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent, reports on the latest attempt to crackdown on the child sex industry.

home and school were taken away by the police. There were no arrests.

Sedburgh School in Cumbria was also searched, where videos are believed to have been seized. Cumbria Police confirmed that the officers were there as part of the co-ordinated child pornography investigation. No arrests were made. The school includes former England rugby captain Will Carling among former pupils.

Two public schools were among the 15 targets raided by police yesterday as part of a co-ordinated operation involving eight forces.

Videos, computer equipment and letters have been confiscated, and were being checked yesterday to discover whether they contained child pornography.

Three teachers are believed to be involved in the inquiry after a three-year investigation. The raids in Operation Clarence took place yesterday at 7am. They include one at Durham School and another at the home of a member of staff from the private school. It is understood that videos from the

The operation was organised by the Metropolitan Police paedophilia unit. Scotland Yard sources denied that there was any link with the raids and the removal earlier this week of videotapes and photographs from the homes and offices of rock star Gary Glitter. The singer was released on bail after being arrested on suspicion

of possessing child pornography on his computer.

In London yesterday, officers raided addresses in Cheam, Islington, Croydon, Harrow, and Albany Street in the West End. Material including videotapes, computer equipment and correspondence were seized. The Internet is increasingly being used as a source of illegal sexual pictures. The Scotland Yard spokesman said: "The raids are part of an intelligence-led operation into a suspected child pornography ring."

Videotapes and other material were seized in a raid on an address in Worcester and material was recovered at four private houses in Hampshire. Merseyside, Wiltshire and Surrey police each searched one address in their respective areas, but nothing was found.

Detective Chief Inspector Jim Reynolds, head of the paedophilia unit, said: "This is a major operation that has been going on for about three years. The fact we have not so far made any arrests does not mean that this operation has not been successful."

Bruno and wife 'not to divorce'

Frank Bruno, the former heavyweight boxer, was fighting to save his marriage yesterday after his wife Laura reportedly won a court order banning him from assaulting her.

Laura, 34, is said to have secured the High Court order after what friends described as a "series of violent outbursts".

The Sun newspaper reported that a judge granted a "non-molestation" order banning Bruno, 36, from "assaulting, molesting or harassing" his wife. Yesterday Heint Brandman, the family's lawyer, said in a statement approved by them: "Frank and Laura are still very much in love. They are trying desperately hard to resolve some difficulties that have arisen in their marriage, particularly with the welfare of their children in mind.

"No separation or divorce proceedings have been instituted or are contemplated."

CJD tests on coma victim

A post-mortem examination was being carried out yesterday on a former kennel worker who may have been one of the youngest victims of "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (v-CJD), caused by mad cow disease. Vicky Rimmer, 20, had been in a coma for four years at Deeside Community Hospital in North Wales after originally falling ill aged 15.

She had been suffering from pneumonia since May. Her grandmother, Beryl Rimmer, who had visited Vicky every day, was said to be "devastated" by her death yesterday. She and Vicky's relatives have insisted that the illness must have been caused by eating BSE-infected food such as hamburgers in the 1980s.

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Inmates held as siege ends

Specialty-trained prison officers rushed a barricaded room at a young offenders' institute to end a 19-hour hostage crisis this afternoon. A prison officer being held by two inmates at the Northumberland centre was freed, apparently unharmed. He was taken hostage as inmates at Casington Young Offenders' Institute at Acklington, near Morpeth, finished an association period on Thursday evening.

A Prison Service statement yesterday said that the officer received cuts and bruising and was badly shaken. Both youths have been arrested. A police investigation is under way and the Prison Service will launch its own inquiry.

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Prisoner's inside story helps children stay on the outside

A prisoner serving a life sentence for the murder of a young woman in a bank raid was allowed out of jail yesterday to talk to schoolchildren. The teenagers told him that the experience had given them a more realistic view of life inside.

He did not look like a man who had been sentenced to a minimum of 25 years in jail. Diminutive, neat and bespectacled, Mick Hart arrived at the Logan Hall in central London in a Peugeot saloon and wearing his brother-in-law's grey suit.

If it was not for the presence of an accompanying uniformed prison officer you would never have guessed he was serving a life sentence for a bungled bank robbery in which a young woman died from shotgun wounds.

Certainly the teenagers who came from all over the south of England to hear his account of life behind bars could not tell him apart from other speakers at an event called "The Offenders", billed as a conference for youth on crime and punishment.

When asked to pick out the serving prisoner from the guest panel, the audience of 1,000



Harsh lesson: Mick Hart, who is serving life, meeting children at a conference in London yesterday designed to help youngsters understand the realities of criminal justice. Photograph: Andrew Burman

I was to go missing now I would be the cause of so many problems for my children and friends. At the moment I have got a good chance of getting out fairly soon."

Anne Wellham, a teacher at The Green School, Isleworth, Middlesex, said that her pupils had been initially fearful when told that a serving prisoner was in their midst. "They felt threatened because they had this very stereotypical view of a prisoner. But when they heard him speak they saw he was a human being."

The governor of Coldingley, John Smith, also attended the conference. "Youngsters don't listen to social workers, teachers, probation officers or parents," he said. "They are much more prepared to talk to someone like Mick who has been there and done it."

After 21 years inside, Hart, a west Londoner, admitted he had been taken back by the speed of Nineties life. But he is negotiating with police to be allowed to continue his crime prevention work after his release in four years' time.

teenagers overwhelmingly opted for a social studies lecturer from the University of Central England.

But Hart, who had been released for the day from Coldingley prison in Surrey, left them in little doubt of his authenticity with a chilling description of a prison career spanning two decades. "Prison

is a very violent place. I would describe it as a concrete jungle," he warned.

Hart described how a fellow inmate had committed suicide outside his cell. "He cut his throat, slashed his wrists and left a knife hanging out of his stomach."

Then Hart, 59, explained his own transformation from a

problem prisoner to a crime fighter, becoming a Christian while stripped and locked in the strong box - a cell within a cell on the prison segregation unit.

Since then he has set up a project involving other inmates who have devised a play and video on the brutality of life in jail. Youngsters thought to be at risk of following criminal

paths have visited the prison to see productions, although many of yesterday's audience are expected to go to university.

But the New Bridge charity, which organised the conference, feels it is important that such youngsters have a better understanding of the realities of the criminal justice system.

Helen Jay, 15, from Warden Park school in Cuckfield, West Sussex, was impressed. "It's like a real experience. Better than people just giving you statistics that do not mean anything. It's a lot more personal and real and hits you a lot harder."

Youngsters gathered round the prisoner during the coffee-break to question him.

"You see that sort of policeman over there, is he guarding you?" asked one boy.

The boy replied: "I'm in the 21st year of a 25-year sentence. It would be a bit pointless running away now."

Perplexed, the lad persisted: "But wouldn't you ever try and escape?" Patiently Hart, who has three children, said: "If

Besotted RAF chief wrote schoolboy love letters to woman, court is told

A senior RAF officer accused of murdering his wife wrote besotted 'schoolboyish' love letters to his Serbian mistress. She was prepared to 'prostitute herself', a court was told yesterday. Kim Sengupta reports.

The letter was long but the content did not vary. Squadron Leader Nicholas Tucker, aged 44 with two teenaged children, had written repeatedly, line by line, "I love you" over six pages to a 21-year-old Serbian interpreter, Dijana Dudukovic, a court was told yesterday.

Sqn Ldr Tucker also telephoned Ms Dudukovic at least once a day over two weeks

while she was living in Geneva, the jury was told. It is alleged he had murdered his 52-year-old wife Carol in a staged car crash after becoming infatuated with the blonde while on duty as a UN observer in Bosnia.

Bertrand Du Pasquier, Ms Dudukovic's landlord in Geneva, told Norwich Crown Court that Sqn Ldr Tucker also telephoned at least once a day for

two weeks. After he had called to say his wife was dead, Ms Dudukovic felt her future was "breaking down". He continued: "She said, 'Now I am ready to do anything. I am even ready to prostitute myself and even go with an older man. If I can find one'."

Mr Du Pasquier said Sqn Ldr Tucker wrote regularly to Ms Dudukovic, although she did

not write back. Mr Du Pasquier claimed she was "tricky and manipulative" and wanted to make a secure future for herself in Western Europe. She is now married and living with another man in Switzerland.

He said: "He rang her at least once a day, sometimes twice. Sometimes lasting five minutes, sometimes 30 minutes. One letter from him was

very surprising. One had five or six pages with the same words repeated all the time like a schoolboy tradition. He was repeating all the time 'I love you' line by line. I read about five pages. I didn't read all the pages. It was signed Nick, she burned the letters."

Two days after Mrs Tucker's death the Sqn Ldr rang Ms Dudukovic what had happened.

Mr Du Pasquier said: "After that call she realised it was not possible for her to go to England with him as was planned. She realised her future had broken down and that she was ready to do anything, even prostitute herself and go with an older man if she could find one."

Mr Du Pasquier met Ms Dudukovic while acting as a UN refugee official in former Yu-

goslavia. He said he had let her stay at his place in Switzerland as a favour to her parents who were worried about her safety during the war. He denied, under cross-examination by David Cocks QC, for the defence, that he had any "sexual intentions" towards her.

Sqn Ldr Tucker, of Hqnington, Suffolk, denies murder. The case continues.

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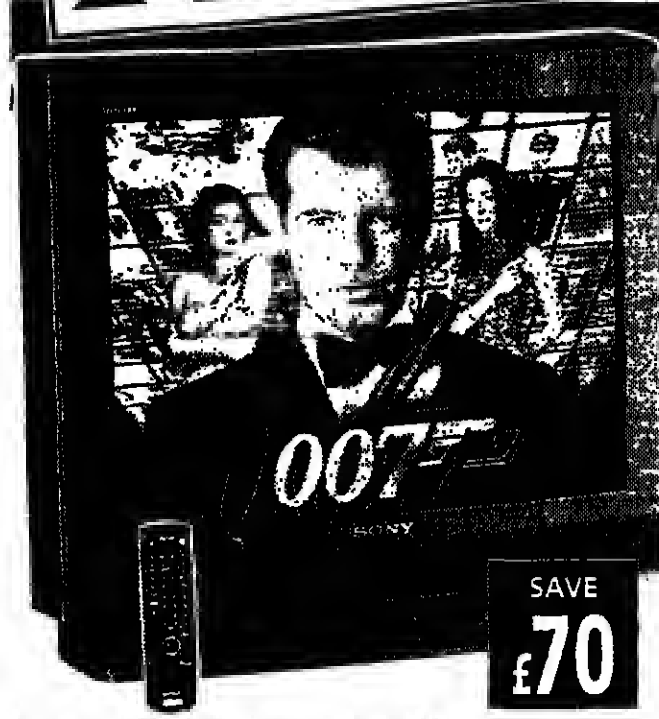
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Model MNCX70. Was £329.99. Was £299.99.

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SONY

CD Hi-Fi with Turntable

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NEW

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7/HEALTH NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997
7

Blair pressed over tobacco adverts ban

An alliance of more than 80 national organisations yesterday urged the Government to stand firm on a comprehensive Europe-wide ban on tobacco advertising.

Jeremy Lorraine, Health Editor, says they argue that the health reasons for the ban have been obscured by political controversy.

Doctors, health professionals and consumer organisations said attention should be focused on the real reason for banning tobacco advertising - the disease and death caused by smoking.

Yesterday the organisations, including the British Medical Association, the Cancer Research Campaign, the National Asthma Campaign and the largest advertising agency Abbot Mead Vickers, launched a report setting out the need for robust legislation.

The report, *Tobacco Advertising, Sponsorship and Promotion: The Case for a Comprehensive Ban*, claims that failure to introduce water-tight legislation will create loopholes and lead to more inventive forms of tobacco promotion.

Campaigners will meet with the Prime Minister next week to put forward their case. They will argue that the real debate has become buried in the political controversy following the Government's decision to exempt Formula One from the proposed European Union Directive.

Dr Sandy Macara, the BMA's chairman, said: "The Government has been Schumachered and it must now get back on track. This report makes an irrefutable case for robust legislation. Anything less than a total ban will be exploited by the tobacco industry - the merchants of death."

Evidence in the report of the harmful effects of smoking includes a survey showing that 80 per cent of asthma sufferers say smoking aggravates attacks. Yet 1.5 million children with asthma live with smokers.

It also sets out clear evidence that children, in particular, respond to cigarette advertising. Adrian Vickers, deputy chair-

man of Abbot Mead Vickers, said: "Cigarette advertising sends a secondary, much more sinister, message. It is saying that cigarette smoking is OK. A part ban on tobacco advertising would leave this effect of advertising untouched."

He added that a comprehensive ban is the only option, otherwise tobacco manufacturers would use other methods such as direct marketing, gifts or clothes to promote cigarettes.

The Government's own figures estimate tobacco-related illnesses cost the economy £1.7bn every year and, despite health education campaigns, smoking still kills 330 people every day.

Smoking levels are increasing among children and a recent survey showed the number of adults smoking increased in 1996, for the first time in 25 years.

Dr John Toy, director of clinical programmes for the Cancer Research Campaign, claims the Government cannot afford to make compromises on the tobacco advertising ban.

"The Government cannot continue to ignore the facts - especially on child smoking," he said. "Strong action now will keep today's children out of the cancer wards of tomorrow. Half-baked measure like the compromise on Formula 1 will ensure that the government makes the most important mistake that any government has made on tobacco for the past 20 years."

The Government has come under repeated attack following its decision to exempt Formula One from the ban on tobacco advertising in return for a voluntary agreement to reduce the visibility of tobacco advertising at events.

The European directive on banning tobacco advertising in sport will be discussed at a Council of Health Ministers' meeting in Brussels on 4 December. The BMA is concerned that confusion surrounding the exemption could mean the EU Directive fails completely.

Dr Macara said: "Our European partners may be unwilling to accept the Government's new position. The Government must do all in its powers to ensure that the directive is accepted at the... meeting."

If the directive fails the whole of Europe will hold the UK responsible, he added.



Unnatural obsession: Many musclebound men and women are so fixated with their physiques that they sacrifice everything to spend hours in the gym honing their bodies

How body builders are deluded into pumping iron

Doctors have identified a mirror image of the slimming disease anorexia, in body builders who become obsessed with the bulge of their muscles. Jeremy Lorraine, Health Editor, examines the dangers of pumping iron.

As slimming was the disease of the 1980s, body building may turn out to be the disease of the

1990s. Musclebound men and women who think they look puny suffer from the same delusion as adolescent girls trying to mimic snake-hipped models who think they look fat. Both have a distorted perception of their own bodies.

American researchers carrying out psychological studies of athletes have identified what they call muscle dysmorphia to describe men and women who become fixated with the shape of their bodies. The obsession leads them to sacrifice

career, family and social life to spend hours in the gym. They are too ashamed of their bodies to go to the beach or swimming pool, and many take anabolic steroids to build bigger muscles.

Typically they weighed themselves several times a day, repeatedly checked their appearance in mirrors, and wore baggy sweatshirts and trousers even in mid-summer to hide their bodies. Missing even one day of weight-lifting caused enormous distress.

The study was led by Dr

Harrison Pope, from McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, who was helped by UK colleagues at the University of Keele in Staffordshire.

Dr Pope, whose findings are published in the journal *Psychosomatics*, said: "The syndrome looks almost like a reverse form of anorexia nervosa. In a typical case of anorexia nervosa, a woman diets until she is severely underweight. Yet, when she looks at herself in the mirror, she perceives herself as fat. By contrast,

in typical muscle dysmorphia, a musclebound body builder will look in the mirror and see himself or herself as out of shape. We think the underlying pathology of the two conditions may be the same, since they are both disorders of body image. The preoccupations simply go in opposite directions."

The researchers say more people may be afflicted by the disorder as weightlifting has increased in popularity. Dr Pope said: "Americans spend about \$3m (£1.8m) a year on com-

mercial gym memberships. And this doesn't count the more than a million Americans who work out at home."

In the UK concern about appearance has led some men to seek breast implants to enlarge their pectoral muscles. Customers are mostly body builders making finishing touches. The operation costs £3,500, the same as for a woman, and involves the insertion of silicone implants behind the pectoral muscles, to throw them forward.

Woman sues over memory loss after electric shock therapy

A woman who has suffered near total memory loss after electro convulsive therapy is suing her health authority. Lawyers believe the case could lead to big damages claims. Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, looks at the claims.

Barbara Arden-Rowe was an eminent scientist and author of several texts. After her scientific career she became a teacher. Now after undergoing ECT at a local hospital she cannot even read a book - because she is unable to remember the beginning of the last sentence she has read.

The horrific impact on her life caused by the treatment given for post-natal depression even though she had last given birth 20 years before - has prompted her to sue the health authority for damages. Her lawyers believe it could lead to one of the biggest medical negligence series of cases the country has seen.

Ms Arden-Rowe, 63, from Loughborough, whose case was highlighted in a television documentary, can barely recall bringing up her children: "Apparently I took them on the Broads and they had a wonderful time. But I cannot remember it at all."

The course of 10 ECT shocks given to her in 1983 after a mental breakdown has now made it impossible for her to resume her teaching career. "How can you teach science when you can't even remember the bones in your body?" she said. "I can read a paragraph, but then it's gone so I can't read a book I can only add up three figures so I can't check bank statements."

Her solicitors Alexander Harris, from Altrincham, Cheshire, believes that her case could be the first of many cases at a time when 20,000 a year are treated with ECT, a course of treatment considered controversial by some doctors.

Ann Alexander, a senior partner, said: "Though the medical profession generally believes that ECT is a fast and effective treatment as a last resort for people with severe depression and other serious mental problems, we believe

that Ms Arden-Rowe's experience is not typical of many others and we are seeking to pursue a full investigation to highlight this issue."

Ms Arden-Rowe said the treatment led to her being stigmatised as mentally ill, which was not her condition.

Last night Leicestershire health Authority, which runs the Towers Hospital where she was treated, said it was unable to comment on the legal action.

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Iraq claims victory as the weapons inspectors return

UN weapons inspectors returned to Baghdad yesterday with the priority of finding weapon stocks that Iraq may have hidden during a tense three-week stand-off with Saddam Hussein.

Iraq's ruling Ba'ath party newspaper, *al-Thawra*, said: "Our latest battle with the world oppressors in America has led to a great victory worthy of pride and glory." It added: "We have proved to everyone... that we have a national iron will."

However, no crowds turned out to watch the inspectors return, which came a day after a Russian-brokered deal persuaded President Saddam to rescind an order expelling the American inspectors. In exchange, Russia pledged to work toward relaxing sanctions, which block oil exports and have devastated the Iraqi economy.

At the UN headquarters in New York, an advisory board of the UN commission responsible for scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction held a day-long brain-

storming session behind closed doors to discuss ways of improving its work methods.

Richard Butler, the chief of the UN Special Commission responsible for the weapons inspections, said that in accordance with the wishes of Security Council, the board would "consider the present situation that was caused by Iraq, what effect it has had and discuss some ways in which we could be made more effective."

One possible outcome would be an increase in the total number of UN weapons inspectors. This would reduce the proportion of American inspectors, partly meeting one of Iraq's key demands. Underscoring US misgivings about the Russian-brokered deal, the United States has continued its military build-up in the Persian Gulf. The aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* arrived in the Gulf on Thursday, and six F-117 Stealth fighters landed in Kuwait.

"They will be there until there is full compliance with UN demands on weapons

inspections," William Cohen, the US Defense Secretary, said.

In Washington, while thanking Russia for its role in the tussle with Iraq, Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, insisted that Moscow does not have the muscle to influence the United States in getting sanctions on Baghdad lifted in the UN Security Council. "The quick answer is no," Ms Albright said, when asked if Russia could influence US voting in the council in getting the sanctions lifted.

In Moscow, the Russian media, long used to lamenting Moscow's weakness in international diplomacy since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, praised Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov for his mediation. One publication called the move a welcome change.

The weapons teams in Iraq plan to resume their inspections today, including a search for suspected stockpiles of VX nerve gas and mustard gas.



Toeing party line: Traditional South Korean Confucianists carrying flags bearing the likeness of the ruling party presidential candidate, Lee Hoi-chang, at the party conference in Taejeon yesterday, when it merged to form the Grand National Party

Grave disclosure rocks US

Charges that a number of burial plots in Arlington National Cemetery, the last resting place of US military heroes, were allocated to Democratic Party donors were denied yesterday. But the very suggestion could further damage President Clinton's already flawed reputation.

Among the things that Americans hold sacred are the Constitution, the flag, Abraham Lincoln and the Arlington National Cemetery. Of the many accusations made against President Clinton concerning his fund-raising activities for the Democratic Party - paid-for invitations to White House coffee mornings, funds collected from White House phones, trips on Air Force One - it was

the revelation that overnight stays in the Lincoln bedroom at the White House were effectively "for sale" to big party donors that inflamed the American public most.

Now though, B&B in the Lincoln bedroom has a competitor for worst-judged donor-inecoative. According to an article in the next issue of *Insight* magazine, a Washington-based publication that has strong ties with the military, big donors were able to win posthumous honour for themselves in the form of a burial at the cemetery. When word escaped of the revelations, many American radio talk shows were inundated with people calling in to protest.

— Mary Dejesky, Washington

Dissident's words of freedom

With humour, presence and comments as eloquent as his written words, China's best-known dissident re-entered public life yesterday with a clear message: during nearly 18 years in prison, his strong will endured.

"I've waited decades for this chance to exercise my rights to free speech," Wei Jingsheng said. "But the Chinese people have been waiting for centuries."

In an extraordinary news conference at a public library, Mr Wei met hundreds of reporters and supporters as if he

had been doing it all his life. He joked, gestured and reaffirmed his commitment both to his cause and to China. "I will love my fatherland for ever - whether I'm there or anywhere else," Mr Wei said in Chinese. "I certainly plan to go back. In fact, I never intended to leave."

The Chinese government released Mr Wei from prison last Saturday and put him on a plane to Detroit, where he received medical treatment for hypertension and other ailments developed during prison life.

— AP New York

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Football hooliganism: now it's an all-American problem

Be careful which door you try when wandering the bowels of Philadelphia's famous Veteran's Stadium when the Eagles are playing at home. You may find yourself facing a stern looking man with black robes and a gavel. He, as *David Osborne* explains, will be a judge and the room will be a court where hooligans will be tried on the spot.

It used to be a "European problem": the blight of hooliganism at sporting events that marred the reputations of teams, cities and even whole countries and depressed ticket sales. Now, one American metropolis fears it may have caught the disease and is reacting in astomishing no-nonsense fashion.

The city is Philadelphia and what has spurred it into action was a nasty fracas at a Monday night American football game on 10 November. With all the country watching courtesy of coverage by ABC television, a match between the local Eagles team and the visiting San Francisco 49ers ended with ugly fighting between competing fans on the field. One man even fired a flare directly into the stands.

The city and the team owners are joining forces to stop a repeat performance at future games. Starting tomorrow, when the Eagles will play host to the Pittsburgh Steelers, extra police will be drafted in to snuff out any aggressive behaviour. Some will even go undercover in Steelers jackets.

The real innovation, however, will be the establishment of a court of law in the sta-



Before the bench: Cleveland Browns' fans protest against the decision to move their team to Baltimore. Violence at the Philadelphia Eagles last game has prompted the city authorities to take drastic action

Photograph: Stephen Dunn/Allsport

to have that ticket taken away. The idea was inspired by the "zero tolerance" approach to crime that New York City mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, has espoused to great acclaim. The sports-court notion is also an adaption of floating "night-courts" that operate in impromptu settings in some of the trouble spots of Philadelphia after dark, especially on weekends. Judge McCaffery is sits in those courts.

Mayor Giuliani's counterpart in Philadelphia, Ed Rendell, is hopeful that the instant-justice solution will be enough to douse the football hooliganism once and for all.

Rendell was moved especially by a caller he heard on a radio phone-in programme lamenting that it was no longer safe to take the family to the games. "We can't stand by and say to people, 'Just don't bring you kids to the game'. That's a horrible statement," the Mayor declared.

While scores of fans have been cited by police officers at games at the Veterans Stadium in the past, most have ignored the court summons and have therefore escaped punishment.

The city says it has not had the resources to chase up everyone cited at the games and force them to appear before a judge, with the judges in situ that problem should be instantly solved.

dium itself. Down on the ground floor next door to where the police already have holding cells for the unruliest of supporters, Judge Seamus Patrick McCaffery will be waiting to dispense some instant justice.

The message is being put out loud and clear: anyone apprehended at the stadium

um this Sunday and charged with any of a variety of charges ranging from unruly behaviour, drunkenness or drug possession will be hauled directly to face Judge McCaffery.

In short order, guilt or innocence will be pronounced and, perhaps even before

the First Quarter is over, heavy fines will be levied. Judge McCaffery himself, a former Marine officer, seems almost to be rubbing his hands with anticipation. "You will be arrested, handcuffed, taken directly downstairs in front of a judge, who will be sitting in full robes in a courtroom," he

promised. "If you're found guilty, you'll receive a significant fine. And if you don't pay you will be sent to jail".

Anyone holding a coveted season ticket and found guilty by McCaffery, or another judge who has also promised to be on hand, Louis Presenza, can also expect

Australia's top dollar cricket stars ready to strike for more cash

Australia's top cricketers plan to strike next month over pay and conditions. If they do they will disrupt an international one-day series. Robert Milliken in Sydney reports on a first in Australian sporting history

Some of them earn almost \$A500,000 (£217,000) a year, others drive Ferraris and BMWs, and all are considered the best-paid men for their skills in the world. Yet it seemed almost certain yesterday that Australia's top cricketers, including the Test team led by Mark Taylor, would strike next month, demanding better pay and conditions:

It will be the first such action by a national team in Aus-

Italian history. As news broke during the second Test between Australia and New Zealand in Perth, and the prospect loomed of a summer marked by a war over recruitment of strike-breakers to replace the likes of Taylor, the Waugh brothers and Shane Warne, politicians pleaded with the players. John Howard, the cricket-loving Prime Minister, said: "Do not go on strike."

over 10 days, when Australia is due to play South Africa and New Zealand in one-day matches. The dispute threatens to drive a wedge through the Australian cricket world almost as damaging as that 20 years ago, when Kerry Packer hijacked the game to stage his World Series Cricket matches in a campaign to win the television rights for official Test cricket.

to be one of the biggest losers from the latest dispute. His Channel Nine television network would lose ratings, revenue and Taylor, Warne, Jan Healy and Steve Waugh, who have lucrative contracts as commentators with the network. "I hope there's no strike," said Gary Burns, Channel Nine's director of sport. "Because if there's a strike, things might get ugly."


pute between the Australian Cricketers' Association, representing 120 top players, and the Australian Cricket Board, the controlling body. The association wants to negotiate a form of collective bargaining, which, it says, will give a better deal for lower-paid and unknown players. The board wants to continue a system of individual contracts with players. It has accused the players of wanting to take control of

the game. The association wrote to member players asking them to endorse the planned strike. By last night a majority had done so.

With stars such as Taylor already earning \$485,000 a year from the board, and Warne, Healy, Glenn McGrath and Steve Waugh a fraction less — before their earnings elsewhere from sponsorships, endorsements and television — Australians are unlikely to give

much sympathy to the militant players.

But some old-timers have. Greg Chappell, a former Test captain and selector, said: "This has been going on for 100 years. It's always been a master-servant relationship for the players. Unless the players now can get their reasonable demands heard, it will be like that for the next 100 years. It's about a principle."

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Marching for the children who bear the world's burden

This week, preparations began around the world for global action to attack the evil of child labour. Domestic legislation has proved toothless, and campaigners want to shock the world into doing something more substantive. Peter Popham interviews the man who heads the global campaign.

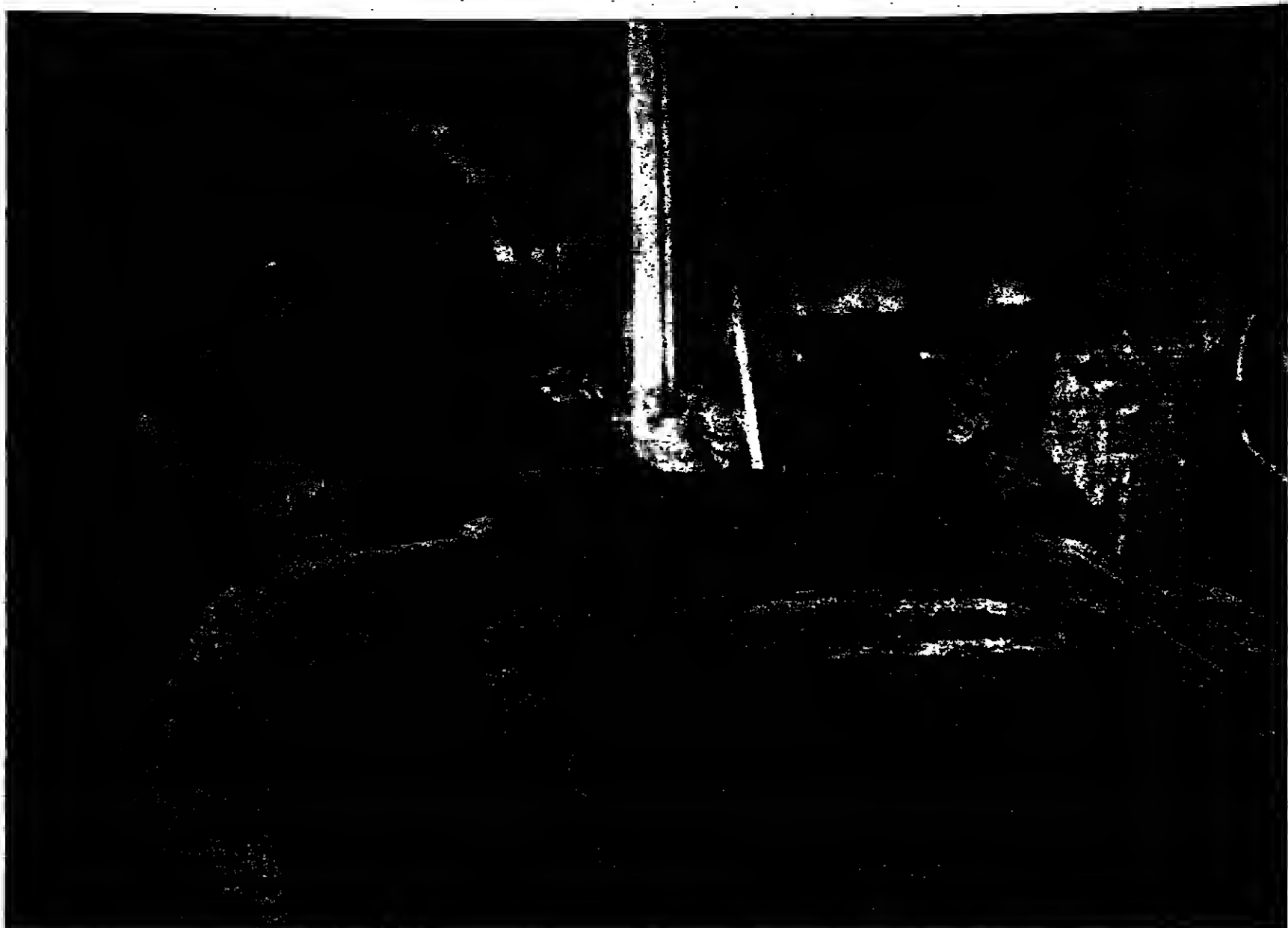
On Thursday 20 November, the "Universal Day for the Rights of the Child", hundreds of organisations, from London to Rio and from Manila to Mexico, announced their involvement in a global march against child labour.

The march will begin in Manila on 17 January 1998. In February and March, other strands of the march will get under way in Rio and Capetown, and the different streams will converge on Geneva in early June, when the International Labour Organisation (ILO) will meet to draft a new international convention to ban the most intolerable forms of child labour.

The man who conceived the global march is Kailash Satyarthi, the founder and head of the South Asia Coalition against Child Servitude (SACS). "The 20th century has seen enough of the globalisation of the economy and armaments," he said at the headquarters of SACS in a Delhi suburb. "In the coming century we need to work together for the globalisation of human compassion and solidarity."

Marking the Children's Rights Day, two thousand young people marched in central Delhi, neatly turned out children from private schools in pressed uniforms holding hands with poor children taking time off from slaving in sweatshops, to protest over the persistence of child labour.

It is appropriate that India should be the country where the idea of this global initiative originates, as it has far more workers under the age of 14 than any other country: 17.5 million according to government figures, but Mr Satyarthi believes the true figure is 60 million, more than the population of Great Britain. They are found in low paid labour of every description, from rag-picking, serving in cheap cafés and selling peanuts on the street, to carpet weaving and stitching trainers. Although the West's attention has been focused on items the West consumes, notoriously the footballs emblazoned with Eric Cantona's face, according to Unicef, factories turning out internationally traded commodities account for less than 5 per cent of the world's child labour force.



Hard work Some of the child labourers (left), many under 13 years of age, seen working on a Delhi building site this week. Kailash Satyarthi (above, pictured courtesy of Unicef), founder and head of the South Asia Coalition against Child Servitude, has initiated a march against child labour which will bring together hundreds of organisations from all over the world, beginning in Manila in January, in Rio and Capetown in March, and converging on Geneva in June next year. Main photograph: Tom Pilton

Much anguished debate in the West, at forums such as the international conference in Oslo last month, has centred around what can be done to tackle the problem. Blanket boycotts of countries such as India, it is generally agreed, make things worse. The imposition of a ban on child labourers at garment factories in Bangladesh led to the instant dismissal of 50,000 children, many of whom were forced to turn to rag-picking or begging to save their families from destitution: in the poorest families, the pittance earned by a working child can amount to a quarter of the family's income.

In India and other countries, domestic legislation has proved toothless: India has

had a strict law against certain forms of child labour on the books since 1986, but according to Mr Satyarthi, such laws are never implemented. "The law is in the hands of labour inspectors, who are some of the most corrupt officials in India," he says.

The idea of a global march came about as a result of Mr Satyarthi's frustration in bringing change about by conventional means. "I've been working on this issue for 17 years. In India there is no dearth of constitutional guarantees, laws, ILO conventions and so on, but they are never implemented. There has never been a serious demonstration of genuine political will to do something about it. The problem is

is in front of our eyes - we see children working in shops, quarries, selling balloons to motorists in central Delhi at midnight - but we ignore it.

"That's why we thought we should go to the common people and build up the momentum of awareness about the issues among them, bring home to them the importance of the right of education."

Epic marches have an honourable place in the history of India's social development. Mr Satyarthi's original inspiration was a march more than 2000 years ago that started from his home town in the state of Madhya Pradesh, through which Buddhist missionaries planted the seed of their phi-

losophy in central Asia. Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March, in 1930, was one of the most important moments in India's struggle for freedom from Britain. And an earlier long march against child labour, which zigzagged 5,200km (3,200 miles) from the southernmost tip of India to Delhi, achieved impressive results. "It raised the profile of the issue and put huge political pressure on the government," Mr Satyarthi says. "The issue was raised 100 times in parliament, and the central government was compelled to initiate programmes on child labour. It was the first time it became a political issue."

Just as important was the impact on remote villages when the march arrived. "We

suddenly turned up on their doorstep in the middle of the jungle like a miracle, and we were able to explain to them how, if their children work, it condemns families to poverty because the children's lack of education prevents them getting better jobs when they grow up."

What is terrifying in India is the rate at which the problem is growing, in tandem with the equally alarming population growth. Even the government's flawed figures indicate that the number of children working is growing at a rate of 25 per cent every 10 years. "Poor families have many children precisely in order to put them to work as young as possible, to feed off destitution," he says. The traditional belief was that numerous children were an insurance against poverty in old age. It is a measure of the desperation that consumes the world's poorest countries that it is not future comfort but present survival that motivates the poorest of the poor.

Mr Satyarthi believes that only global pressure - on governments, employers and communities - can begin to turn the tide.

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صكزا من الاصل

11/MEDIA NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997
11

Replay: Jeff Randall, played by Mike Pratt (left) with Kenneth Cope as Marty Hopkirk's ghost, in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, which is to return, recast and revamped, to the small screen

Sixties hit set to rise from TV graveyard

For anyone of a certain age, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* means running home from school in a pair of flares to watch television. Now the series is being re-made. Paul McCann, Media Correspondent, wallows in nostalgia.

Long before Britain had heard of Martin Bell, Neil Hamilton or Tatton, Marty Hopkirk was the good guy in a white suit on British television. And now he's coming back.

Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased) is be-

ing re-made by the company that made the film *Trainspotting*.

PolyGram Film's television division, Working Title, has the rights to the cult Sixties private detective series, and has new scripts by the writer James McInnes ready to go into production.

PolyGram bought the rights from Lord Lew Grade's ITC television library and is using a loan from the European Media Two programme to fund development of the series.

No stars are yet in place to play the detectives but the series is just the latest development in the trend for so-called nostalgia TV. Last week it was reported that *Charlie's Angels* is to be resurrected in a Hollywood movie while at Tedding-

ton Studios in London *The Professionals* is being re-made.

The boom in nostalgia TV reflects a feeling among television executives that many of the best popular television ideas come from a creatively fertile period in the Sixties and Seventies. The more cynical believe that, rather than take risks, producers are turning to old formats.

As everyone over the age of 30 knows, *Randall and Hopkirk* was a two-man detective agency until Marty Hopkirk was killed in an apparent car accident in the first episode in September 1969.

For reasons that are never made quite clear they become a one man, one ghost, detective agency when Marty's spirit hangs around to help his partner solve a

mystery each week. Only Jeff could see his deceased partner, who wore a white suit to identify him as a ghost.

Marty Hopkirk made a useful detective in that he could walk through walls and doors and transport himself by closing his eyes and simply wishing to be somewhere. Thanks to this spying on the bad guys was Marty's speciality. Unfortunately, his temporal nature also meant that each week he had to stand by helpless while Jeff got beaten up.

The series, inspired by the Noel Coward play, *Blithe Spirit*, was produced by Dennis Spooner, the man who made the other cult detective hit of the late Sixties, *Department S*.

Marty was played by Kenneth Cope

who became famous playing Jed Stone in *Coronation Street* for five years, also in the Sixties.

Cope also appeared in many other classic Sixties series, from *Doctor Who* to *Dixon of Dock Green*. He was last seen in a guest role in *Casualty*, before changing careers and running a restaurant in Oxfordshire.

Jeff Randall was played by the leather-faced and laconic Mike Pratt who died in 1976. In the series Jeff maintained a discreetly chaste relationship with Marty's widow Jeannie which may be difficult to sustain in the less strait-laced Nineties.

PolyGram is maintaining a silence on the new series until it secures actors and a broadcaster, but the series is expected to be on air by the end of next year.

Insurance ads forced off air by complaints

The Independent Television Commission has suspended the transmission of an advertisement by Direct Line after complaints from rival insurance companies.

Broadcasters have been told not to show the advertisement while the ITC investigates complaints that it was misleading. Direct Line says its campaign has now ended anyway.

The ITC said it received seven complaints accusing the telephone insurer Direct Line of showing traditional insurance brokers in a damaging way.

Among the companies who complained was Norwich Union, which accused Direct Line of being "intentionally and damagingly misleading in its portrayal of brokers".

John Kitson, marketing manager for Norwich Union, said: "We are delighted with the ITC suspension and it is a real victory for the insurance broker and Norwich Union. We believe Direct Line has intentionally tried to portray brokers from the past rather than the present."

"Not only did we consider it misleading to the public, but also very damaging to the business of thousands of highly efficient and modern insurance brokers."

An ITC spokeswoman said: "We are investigating the complaints at the moment and have requested that broadcasters suspend the advertisement while we look into them."

The advertisement features a Direct Line operator answering questions posed by a potential customer and has scenes including a high street broker's shop and a car accident.

A spokeswoman for Direct Line said: "We are disappointed to see Norwich Union making these claims. But the fact that the ITC has suspended the advert does not mean that any of the complaints by Norwich Union or others have been upheld."

Earlier this year, Direct Line ran another controversial campaign where it asked rival companies to appear in its commercial if they could match a series of its product promises.

When a number of rival insurance companies came forward, Direct Line was effectively forced to give them hundreds of thousands of pounds of free airtime.

— Paul McCann

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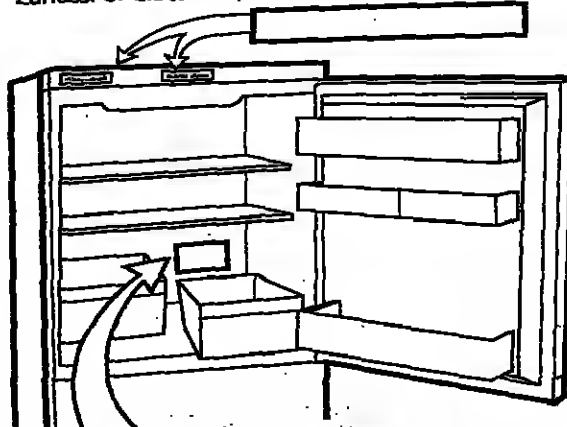
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Wales in space? And Dragonfire's mission control is based in a pub

The Bell pub in the heart of the Powys farming community serves as mission control for the first attempt to put a Welsh rocket in space. But, as Ian Burrell reports, the project is entirely serious.

Max Boyce, the Welsh comedian, once included in his routine a fanciful sketch about the principality's attempts to put men on the moon. Yes, the Welsh astronauts concluded, it was made of cheese, and yes, it tasted of Caerphilly.

Plans by Newtown (population 11,000), in the hills of Mid-Wales, to style itself as a rival to Houston, Texas, as a centre for launching rockets, might also seem like a joke.

But the team members who style themselves Casa (Cymru Aeronaotics and Space Administration), believe they are on the verge of creating history.

No amateur rocket launcher has succeeded in sending a projectile into space, which under the European definition is 100km into the air.

In January, the 15-strong Welsh team will carry out its first test-launches on a 45-foot long rocket powered by a mixture of polybutadiene and liquid oxygen. If they are successful, Casa will aim to put its "Dragonfire" rocket into space in the spring, as soon as weather conditions are favourable.

The Bell's landlord, Peter Burt, has been overseeing meetings of the space committee. Mr Burt is a space fanatic, having decorated his hostelry with the prototypes of his earlier, less ambitious, rocket launches. His best effort was a missile with a fibre-glass nose cone which attained 1,500 feet in 1995 before descending by parachute.

From behind the bar, Mr Burt serves pints of a new real ale, named Dragonfire, which is brewed locally and helps to raise funds for the space programme. It also fuels the debate among members of the space committee, which includes an industrial chemist, a computer wizard, a trajectory specialist and a member of parliament.

Lembit Opik, the local Liberal Democrat MP, is another space enthusiast, whose conversations with the publican while canvassing in the area a year ago sowed the seeds for the Dragonfire project.

Mr Opik said: "Outsiders laugh but ... [local] people take this project very seriously." The MP moved to reassure

people who might be concerned at the safety risks if the launch went wrong. "It's propelled using a relatively safe material which only burns in a stream of high-pressure oxygen, which means there is no risk of it exploding," he said. "If it falls ... the biggest danger is that you get bashed on the head." For which reason, the committee has lined up a remote site at Phyllymon, the second highest peak in Wales.

The team is trying to raise £250,000 from Welsh companies to finance the remainder of the project. A Dragonfire project website is set to attract further commercial interest.

"People need to be sure that this is a serious project before they start investing money," he said. "What this venture is about is promoting scientific education in Wales."

Welsh schools have been invited to submit ideas for scientific experiments which can be carried out while the rocket is in space. Firms have already promised to supply diggers, generators and the scaffolding for the launch tower.

Mr Burt said: "We intend to control the rocket on its journey back and return it to its original launch site which is something that not even NASA has been able to achieve so far."



Countdown: The Newton space team erecting a half-size model of the Welsh rocket, set to be launched in the spring Photograph: Andrew Burman

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Sheep-dip pollution prompts crackdown

Upland farmers carelessly disposing of a new kind of sheep dip are wiping out life in mile after mile of rivers and streams. Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, says that the Government's Environment Agency has plans to crack down on the polluters.

In Cumbria alone, about 90 miles of river have been damaged by the new synthetic pyrethroid (SP) sheep dips leaking into the water.

The chemical wipes out most of the tiny aquatic insects, crustacea and other invertebrates near the base of the food webs. This starves the fish and that, in turn, deprives otters and river birds of their fish food. Streams have also been harmed in upland areas of the West Country and Wales.

SP dips have been marketed as a safer alternative to rid-

ding sheep of parasites than the organophosphate dips which have caused severe, chronic illness in many farmers. Sales have soared over the past five years. But according to the Environment Agency, they are up to one hundred times more lethal to river life, and a teaspoonful entering a stream can wipe out invertebrates for hundreds of metres downstream.

Farmers are currently asked to follow a Code of Good Practice when they dispose of surplus dip. This allows them to pour it onto flat grassland, provided it is at least 10 metres from any river and 50 metres from any well or borehole.

But the European Commission reckons this is inadequate, and is prosecuting Britain for failing to comply with EU water pollution laws. The Government has responded by promising new regulations covering the disposal of waste dip, to come into force next year.

When these are issued the agency expects to be put in

charge. Farmers wishing to dispose of dip on their land will have to get its permission. If there is any risk of dip reaching a river, this will not be granted.

The agency's pollution prevention manager, David Griffiths, told a sheep farming conference yesterday: "We will not hesitate to prosecute where there is evidence that farmers have caused pollution."

Both coarse and game fishermen are calling for the SP dips to be withdrawn. They can also cause problems when the wool from dipped sheep passes through processing and cleaning plants - their effluent can harm rivers. The Environment Agency is talking to the textile industry about tackling that.

Grampian Pharmaceuticals, which sells most of the SP dip in Britain, said that provided the instructions accompanying the product were followed there should be no damage. It had sent details of the Code of Practice to all 8,000 of its customers.

Smuggler gets six years

A love-struck Dutchman who was seduced by his English girlfriend into swallowing cocaine worth £115,000 and smuggling it into Britain was jailed for six years yesterday.

Ernest Wiredu, 35, who could have died if any of the 91 packages of cocaine had burst, stood to make just £1,400 by breaking the law. But suspicious Customs officials stopped the nervous-looking courier the moment he arrived from the Netherlands on a cross-Channel train at London's Waterloo station two months ago.

Southwark Crown Court in London heard that a total of 714 grammes of high purity cocaine was later recovered from him. The court was told hard-up Wiredu, who had never been in trouble before, became desperate after learning that his mother was unwell and needed money. He poured out his problems to his girlfriend who saw an opportunity to make some cash for herself as well.

The woman, who has never been caught, introduced him to a drug dealer and then persuaded him that this was the best way out of his dilemma. But Judge Paul Focke QC, told Wiredu, who admitted one count of smuggling, that despite his personal problems and the help he had given to police in an attempt to track down the others involved, there was no alternative to a long sentence of imprisonment.

"You knew full well what you were doing," the judge said.

Aberdeen road-pricing plan

Road pricing is being considered by councillors in Scotland to pay for a 17.5-mile route around Aberdeen. The Western Peripheral road, costed at £80m, is unlikely to be financed by the Scottish Office; instead, councillors commissioned a report into alternative funding. Simple "cordon tolls" - where motorists pay before joining a road - have been considered, as well as more sophisticated tolling technologies.

Making motorists pay for using roads has become a regular feature of councils' plans to raise revenue and tackle congestion. Authorities in Bristol, London and Edinburgh have all put forward road-pricing schemes.

However, environmentalists said that Aberdeen's move is "going about the problem in the wrong way". Simon Festing, a spokesman for Friends of the Earth, said: "Some of the money, preferably all of it, raised should be used to fund public-transport schemes".

Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent

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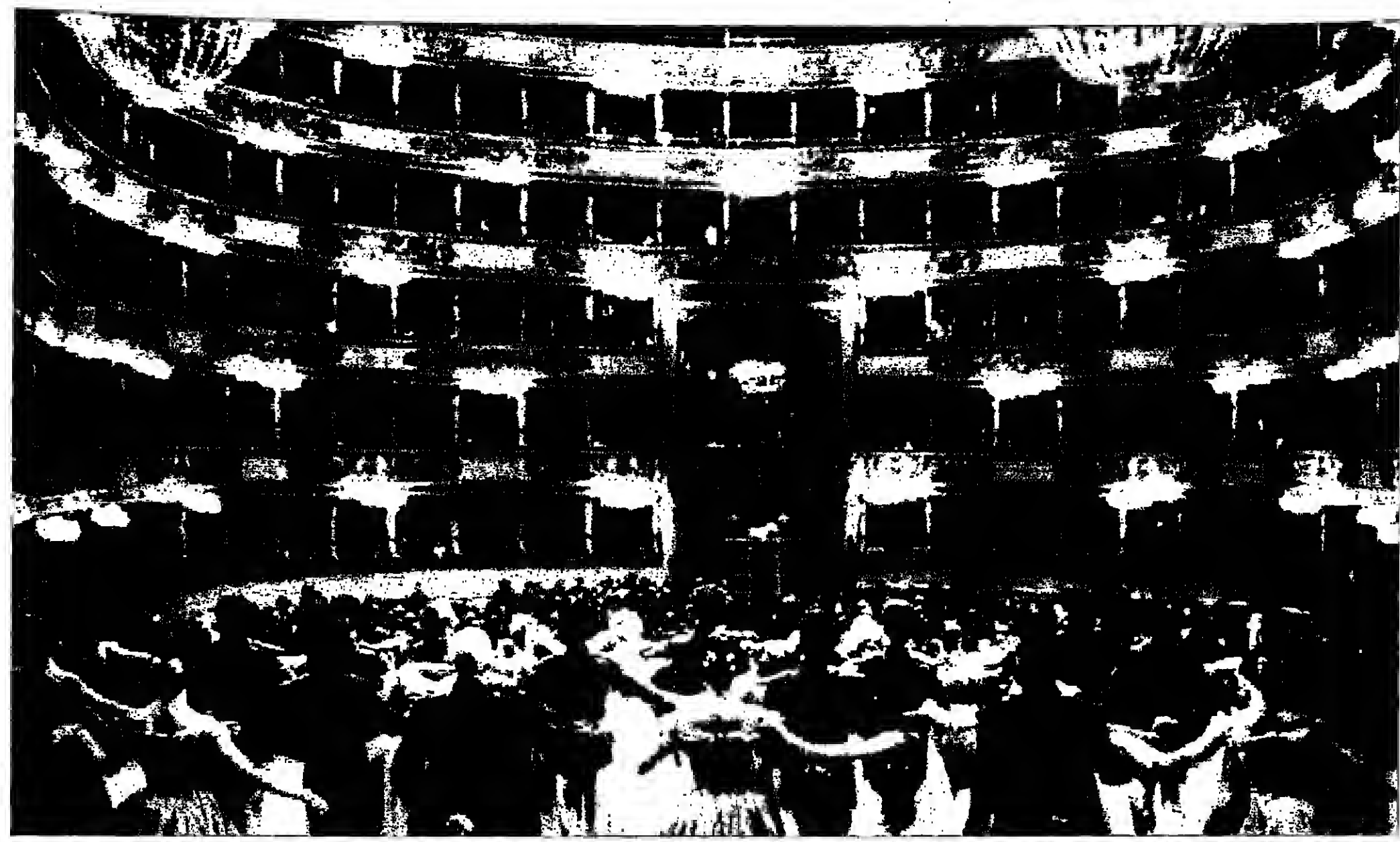
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Extravagance is opera's lifeblood. Our top companies are being squeezed – so how do other countries cope?



Aria of grievance: La Scala, Milan, which, like other Italian houses, indulged in unbridled extravagance, a habit that has now been curtailed somewhat by financial stringency

NEW YORK

Bullish Wall Street can boost fortunes

The health of the classical music scene in the United States, and New York in particular, depends not so much on public subsidy as on the bullishness of Wall Street. David Usborne explains the differences in financial culture across the Atlantic.

For now, at least, the National Endowment for the Arts, the federal government body that distributes cash to the arts across the United States, is still breathing. But only just and the Republicans still hope some day to kill it. This, of course, is bad news for the NEA's beneficiaries. Among them is the Metropolitan Opera in New York, which this year received a sharply reduced grant of \$350,000, barely enough to satisfy the cost of a single star soprano in one winter production.

The Met, however, is not quaking (and the Republicans know it). It, like so many other cultural institutions, is used to getting only dribbles of money from the public purse. More important to it by leagues is the money it can squeeze from kindly patrons, ranging from rich individuals and businesses.

And in that regard, the position these days could hardly be rosier. The economy is booming across the country and, more particularly to New York, the wealth of many is being exponentially boosted by the bull run on Wall Street. The Met and several other New York artistic centres, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the city library, are reporting record takings.

Donations from individuals has always been critical to the Opera. Indeed, its foundation in 1885 is credited to a certain August Belmont, a Jew who decided to build his own opera house after being denied a box at what was then New York's main opera venue, the Academy of Music.

Diana Beattie, a leading society fund raiser in the city today, underlines the boon that the Wall Street rush brings to the Opera and other institutions. "The ripples from Wall Street just can't be overestimated," she said.

Arlene Schuler, director of development at the Lincoln Center where the Metropolitan Opera is housed, said: "Everyone is riding the wave of the economy. The Metropolitan Opera, Juilliard, the City Ballet have all just launched or are about to launch capital campaigns. We all want to take advantage of this opportunity while it's here."

And then there is the revenue that the Opera can generate for itself, through ticket sales but also through merchandise sales in shops and through its publications departments.

Recent statistics show opera gaining in popularity in most urban centres of America, with fans increasingly willing to shell out huge sums to buy seats for entire seasons. Even with single seats going for \$150 a pop, the Metropolitan Opera is a regular sell-out.

Chorus of accountants calls the tune as state largesse is slashed

ITALY

Andrew Gumbel in Rome examines the pork-barrel politics, off-stage histrionics and reluctant belt-tightening in Italy, opera's spiritual home.

There was never a show quite like it. *Aida* might demand elephants and Berlioz's *Les Troyens* a cast of thousands, but Gian Paolo Cresci - notorious general manager of the Rome Opera in the venal early 1990s - knew how to make a spectacle of himself in a way that the great operatic composers

of the 19th century could only hint at. Mr Cresci hired staff by the hundred and dressed them all in livery coats, threw champagne parties whenever the spirit moved him and ordered priceless Persian carpets for his foyer. To keep the morale of his fire prevention staff high, he gave them all free English lessons. Never was so much effort thrown behind so little - a mere dribble of indifferent performances each year - but Mr Cresci did not seem to mind.

As one of his highly placed political mentors once commented, he was an opera all by himself. Naturally, this state of affairs could not last, and when Italy's magistrates launched their anti-corruption drive in 1992, Mr Cresci and his system of management was ditched just in time to keep the balliffs

away. And Rome was not the only problem facing Italy's new generation of political leaders. For decades, the country's 13 opera houses - all funded exclusively by the state - had developed varying degrees of wanton extravagance. Each had hundreds of largely useless full-time employees on its books (all of them members of powerful and highly fractious unions), spent far too much money on sets and costumes, never stooped to revive productions, even successful ones, and managed no more than a few dozen performances a year.

The state pumped in more than 400bn lire each year (£150m), and saw a return of barely 10 per cent on its investment. The Italian opera world has undergone a painful coming of age in the intervening years. Since last summer the 13 houses have ceased to be *ent*, or state-run enterprises, and are now managed as self-financing foundations. They are still eligible for state funding, but with a ceiling of 40 per cent of their overall budget. Not only do they have to find private sponsors for the first time in their existence, but they also have to find a way to break even.

The results have been rather mixed. Perhaps predictably, La Scala in Milan has had little difficulty attracting private sponsors, including banks, energy companies and the tyre manufacturer Pirelli. The Rome Opera, under its energetic new manager, Sergio Escobar, has cut its costs by about 30 per cent, dramatically increased the num-

ber of performances and brought in as much as 30 per cent extra at the box-office. The turnaround has not been rapid enough, however, to balance the books, and the state has offered "compensation" money for the cuts that have been inflicted. The unions, predictably, are forecasting the end of the world as they know it, but there seems to be genuine concern about the viability of the new regime, particularly for the smaller, less well-known houses.

The reforms have also left a question-mark over La Fenice, the Venice opera house, which burst down nearly two years ago. With all this cutting going on, rebuilding funds have been thin on the ground and it could take years before the new house gets back on its feet.

What, briefly, of the three other opera houses in Paris? All are smaller, lower-profile operations, surviving through virtue of diversification. The Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Opéra-Comique receive minimal subsidies, helping to support themselves via a policy of renting out rooms for other events.

The Théâtre du Châtelet is owned and subsidised (£13m per annum) by the City of Paris. It has carved a niche with cycles of 20th-century and Baroque operas. At first glance, the French have been fairly successful in the huns-on-seats department, filling an average of 90 per cent of places at the two houses belonging to the Opéra National de Paris and 83 per cent at the Châtelet. Ticket prices at the ONP range from £6 to £64, at Châtelet from £5 to £75. When asked what the current deficit is, the ONP confidently states that there is no deficit.

But it's a question of terminology; the French simply cover the yawning gaps between what is spent on productions and the money coming in from ticket sales with a wash of public money, without which opera would be unsustainable. A simple sum reveals all: the state subsidy for 1997 is approximately £55m for the Opéra National de Paris; divide this by the projected number of tickets sold in 1997, 808,000, and you see that the state subsidises each seat by £68.

The Bastille falls to the level of a national soap

FRANCE

How does Paris manage to sustain five opera houses? All is not what it seems. Lucy Reid finds that Paris is also having trouble putting its houses in order.

Opéra Bastille, dubbed the "People's Opera" when it opened in 1989, has become more like a soap opera. Recent episodes include the sentencing of the former chairman, Pierre Bergé, to 10 months' imprisonment and a fine of £3,000 after a set

collapsed, killing one person and injuring 40 others. The new chairman, Hugues Gall, is in charge of the two main opera houses, the nineteenth-century Opéra Garnier and Bastille, now united as the Opéra National de Paris (ONP). He was employed in 1995 as the Sir John Harvey-Jones of the opera world on a six-year contract, wielding absolute executive power.

Perhaps Mr Gall's toughest challenge has been reversing the negative press given to the Opéra Bastille throughout its brief lifetime. One of the latest setbacks has not been one of interior strife, so much as exterior. Visitors will note the presence of what resemble enormous fishing nets

swathing the bathroom-tile-like facade of the building. They are not there to catch fish. Since 1990, the stone slabs which make up the exterior of the house have been crumbling away.

Mr Gall has started to turn things around by concentrating on crowd-pulling favourites. He has cut back on excesses, which saw huge fees paid to some performers. He has imposed a more autocratic style of management, by sacking the former musical director, Myung-Whun Chung, and employing an American, James Conlon, as principal conductor.

The two houses put on 14 productions this year, including nine operas, compared to only five in 1995.

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Poll leaves Bosnian Serbs on edge of deep divide

Bosnian Serbs start voting today in parliamentary elections that may result in their territory being split into two. Marcus Tanner says the results threaten to plunge the former Yugoslav republic back into turmoil.

For a year-and-a-half, the Bosnian Serb former leader, Radovan Karadzic, has been locked in a battle for supremacy with his one-time ally, Biljana Plavsic. The quarrel revolves over whether the Serbs should co-operate with the West by carrying out the provisions of the American-backed peace deal for Bosnia, which was hammered out at Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995.

This weekend's vote will show which of the two factions has carried the day.

Mrs Plavsic insists that the Serbs have no choice now but to co-operate, if they are to build up a functioning state in the 49 per cent of Bosnia which Dayton awarded them.

Karadzic remains utterly unreconciled, which is not surprising, as the Dayton provisions demand the prosecution of war criminals, and he himself has been indicted

by the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. Forbidden to stand for election by the Dayton terms, he remains the real master of his Serb Democratic Party.

The split is geographical, as much as political. Mrs Plavsic has her base in Banja Luka, capital of Bosnia's north-west, an area with a pre-war Serbian majority, and the home of Bosnian Serb (relative) political moderates. Karadzic's stamping ground is the war-ravaged east, governed from the old ski resort of Pale. In the towns of the east, such as Srebrenica, Muslims formed the majority before the war and the local Serbs are frantically suspicious that any co-operation with the West will mean their former Muslim neighbours - those the Serb militias didn't kill - returning home.

Mrs Plavsic claims her approach will result in Western loans that will enable the Bosnian Serbs' collapsed economy to recover. She also wants access to Washington's \$400m "train and equip" programme for Bosnia. At the moment, this is supplying arms exclusively to the Muslim-Croat federation in the other 51 per cent of Bosnia, but Mrs Plavsic believes Bosnian Serbs can join in, too, if they co-operate.

If the two rivals triumph in their re-

spective heartlands, the Bosnian Serb sub-state will split into two separate territories, with two hostile governments.

The split is already half-complete. The media and police in the east are run by Karadzic's men. In the north-west, Nato-led peace-keepers handed over the local television station and the transmitter to Plavsic supporters. It may not have helped the moderates in the long term, exposing them to nationalist charges of acting as puppets of the West.

Some observers predict that both Mrs Plavsic and Karadzic will see their vote slump and that the real winner will be the Bosnian branch of the Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical party.

This more or less openly fascist organisation promises hard work, ethnic purity and the union of all Serbs - whether the West likes it or not - in one big Serb state.

If either Seselj or Karadzic do well in the election, it will throw Western efforts to get the two Bosnian entities working together into a tail spin. For Seselj, Bosnia is simply a launching pad for greater things. His goal is to use Bosnia as a springboard to overthrow President Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia proper.



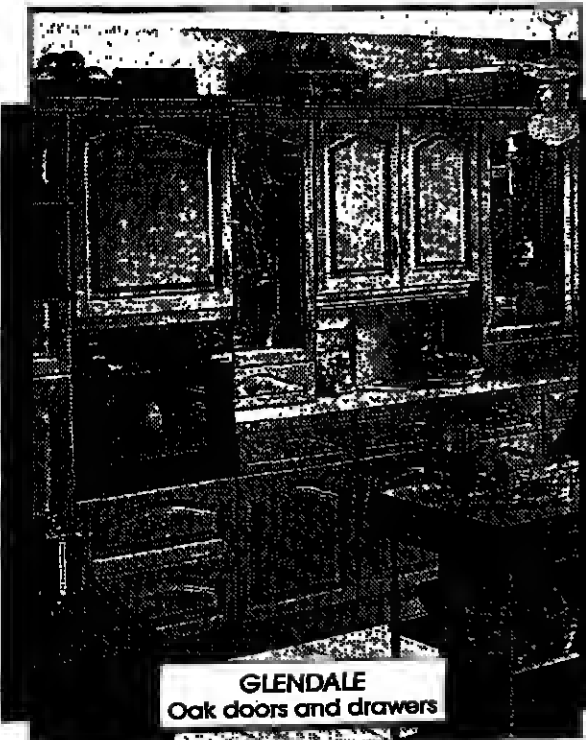
Grief-stricken relatives of five illegal Albanian immigrants after recognising the bodies of family members in Brindisi who drowned trying to reach the Italian coast. Photograph: AFP

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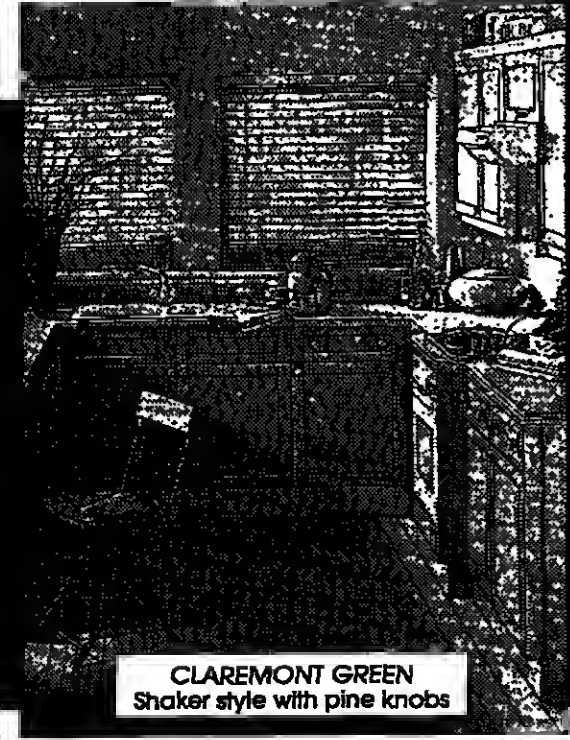
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Call to halt Papon trial

The chief lawyer of the accused French Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon said the trial of his elderly client for crimes against humanity should be called off if he continued to suffer health problems.

"If there are more interruptions, the trial should be stopped," Jean-Marc Varaut told the newspaper *Sud-Ouest* in comments published yesterday.

After a string of delays over Papon's frail health, the trial was suspended on Monday for 10 days after he was taken to hospital with double pneumonia.

Francis Vuillemin, another Papon lawyer, said his client's condition was unchanged since he entered hospital.

Reuters - Bordeaux

Russian reshuffle brings 'stability'

Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister, said yesterday his government was more stable than ever after a reshuffle that clipped the wings of leading young reformers.

But his liberal first deputy, Boris Nemtsov, cast doubt on Mr Chernomyrdin's optimism, saying the shake-up was the result of deep-rooted divisions over economic reform among Kremlin power brokers.

"Russia has entered a new stage of political maturity," Interfax news agency quoted Mr Chernomyrdin as saying. "The state is getting stronger and its role is growing in every sphere, especially in the economy."

The other first deputy prime minister, economic reform chief Anatoly Chubais, forecast a tough time for the man named to replace him as finance minister, particularly if world financial markets remain volatile.

President Boris Yeltsin relieved Mr Chubais, 42, and Mr Nemtsov, 38, of the finance and energy portfolios respectively following uproar over money Mr Chubais admitted taking in return for writing a book.

Russian newspapers believed that Mr Chernomyrdin, 59, in office for five years, had entered the winter from the shake-up on Thursday.

Reuters, Moscow

'Evil or mad' church crisis

A crisis setting Swiss Roman Catholics against the Vatican escalated when a group of priests demanded the resignation of a bishop branded by opponents as either evil or mad.

The Council of Priests in Switzerland's second-biggest diocese, Chur, accused their bishop, Wolfgang Haas, of splitting the church by his authoritarianism and said he should finally stand down or be forced to quit by the Pope.

Martin Kopp, a representative of the priests, said Bishop Haas had proved himself to be "psychologically incapable" of listening to opponents. "At the end, people in the room were furious. They said to him either you are wicked or you are really very, very ill," Kopp said. "Personally I believe the latter is true. 'We have a madman at the head of the diocese. And he's wrecking it,' he said in a telephone interview.

AP - Geneva

Christ film prompts protest

A planned Friday television broadcast of Martin Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ* was postponed yesterday after protests by Hungary's Catholic and Protestant leaders.

Carlo Rocco, spokesman for Hungary's new commercial channel, did not say when, or if, a later broadcast date was planned. It was the second time that church leaders had intervened to prevent a broadcast - a planned showing by state television in 1994 was cancelled after their objections.

AP, Budapest

Bulgaria in Crisis
Appeal to Independent Readers

LEFT TO FREEZE
Yordan, 14, already malnourished could die from cold and hunger this winter unless aid reaches him now. With temperatures plummeting to -15°C Yordan's scant clothing and no shoes offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.

No Money To Feed The Children No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Unless urgent help is sent, thousands of children will suffer terribly this winter.

There is little money to heat the orphanages. Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry and the cold could prove fatal for many children this winter. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need.

Your gift today will save lives and bring hope.

£28 could buy enough emergency food packs to feed 28 orphanage children for a week or heat an orphanage for 3 days.

Please send whatever you can to help children survive the winter or call 01273 299399 NOW

I enclose £ to save Bulgarian orphanage children. Cheques to The European Children's Trust. Or debit my Access/Visa/CAF card

Card no. Expiry date. Signature. Date. Mr/Ms/Miss/Ms. Address. Postcode. Telephone no.

Return to: Tanya Barron, (07), Bulgaria Emergency Appeal, The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST KE8399 644 Queens Street, LONDON, EC4A 4AR or call 01273 299399 NOW. Registered Charity No. 1048737

Please act NOW - winter is coming

Seven killed in gun rampage

Seven people were killed when a 36-year-old man ran amok with a pistol in the Austrian province of Salzburg. He shot dead six people, including a three-year-old girl, before killing himself when police caught up with him. The deputy mayor of Mauterndorf, a village 100km from Salzburg city, also died after trying to mediate.

Reuters, Vienna

سكرا من الامم

Tories in turmoil as 'No home Malone' fails

The Conservative crisis bounced from bad to worse yesterday when Michael Heseltine attacked his party leader's judgement. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on two by-elections and a banishment.

In the Winchester by-election, there was not so much a landslide as an avalanche, with the Liberal Democrats achieving a sensational 21,000 majority, while over in true-blue Beckenham, there was a further swing from the Tories to Labour, reducing the Conservative majority to little more than 1,000 votes.

But the continuing problems of the Conservative Party were then exacerbated when the former deputy prime minister felt provoked into delivering a withering public rebuke for Mr Hague.

Yesterday morning, the Conservative leadership unexpectedly withdrew the Commons whip from the rebellious Peter Temple-Morris, the MP for Leominster, who was provoked into resigning from the party. He had previously said he was not defecting to Labour, but would stay and fight the European corner within his own party.

Commenting on the disciplinary action — one step short of expulsion — a leadership spokesman said that officials were not going to put up with Mr Temple-Morris's continuing disloyalty, following his announcement that he could not stand as a Conservative, against the single currency, at the next election.

Mr Heseltine told ITN news: "I think it's an unwise and unnecessary decision... he represents a stream of opinion within the Conservative Party that we should seek to encourage, not to divorce."

A senior Labour source said Mr Hague was "bonkers", but the Tory leader was unmoved. "I'm not leading the Conservative Party by trying to please everybody," Mr Hague said, "but I do expect people to have a clear commitment to the Conservative Party."

"Michael Heseltine always expected that of everybody when he was the deputy prime minister. I expect it now I'm the leader of the party."

That blunt repudiation of Mr Heseltine will dismay the pro-European wing of the Conservative Party. In a speech in Brighton last night, Lord Renton, a former chief whip, said it was his worst nightmare to think that there were no Tory MPs in Brighton or Hove, and a 21,000-vote Liberal Democrat majority in Winchester was a total impossibility.

"The simple message is that a hard anti-European line is not working and does not deserve to work for the Tories," he said.



Party politics: Screaming Lord Sutch shouts into the ear of Gerry Malone, losing Tory candidate in the Winchester by-election

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Mr Temple-Morris later trumped his leadership by announcing that he would sit as a One Nation Conservative — on the Labour benches of the House — but a Labour spokesman said: "He will be more than welcome sitting on our benches and he would be welcomed if he decided at a later date to go the whole way." That is a distinct possibility.

William Hill, the bookmaker, followed up the by-election results with an even-money chance that Mr Hague would be replaced as party leader before the next election.

Mr Hague's reaction to the by-election results was to say that the party had won one and lost one. "It is going to take time to rebuild our fortunes," he said.

The Prime Minister, in Luxembourg for the jobs summit yesterday, said: "Here they

are as the Opposition party and they are losing Winchester by an even larger amount, and they have got a cut majority in Beckenham, which was one of their safest seats."

But the night and day belonged to Mark Oaten, whose initial two-vote win in Winchester last May had been challenged by former MP Gerry Malone — yesterday he achieved the biggest Liberal Democrat majority in the Commons. Mr Malone has lost so many by-elections that he is known at Westminster as "No home Malooe".

Paddy Ashdown said: "May 1 was not a high-water mark for us and, in converting Winchester, which has been historically a safe Conservative seat, to one with such a substantial majority, there really are no glass ceilings for the Liberal Democrats."

BY-ELECTION RESULTS

WINCHESTER

LD win. Mark Oaten (LD) 37,006 (68.05% +25,993) Gerry Malone (C) 15,450 (28.41% -13,655) Patrick Davies (Lab) 944 (1.74% -8,783) Robin Page (Referendum UK Independence Alliance) 521 (0.96%) Lord David Sutch (Monster Raving Loony Party) 316 (0.58% +0,09%) Richard Huggett (Liberal Democrat Mark Here To Win) 59 (0.11%) Ms Rosemary Barry (Natural Law Party) 48 (0.09%) Roger Everest (Euro Conservative) 40 (0.07%) LD maj 21,556 (39.64%) 19,822 swing C to LD Electorate 79,116 Turnout 54.38% (68.74% -9.92%)

BECKENHAM

C hold. Mrs Jacqui Laic (C) 13,162 (41.25% -1,223) Bob Hughes (Lab) 11,935 (37.40% +4,043) Ms Rosemary Vetterlein (LD) 5,864 (18.38% +0,243) Philip Rimmer (Liberal) 330 (1.03% -0,293) John McAuley (National Front) 257 (0.81% +0,136) Leonard Mead (New Britain Referendum) 237 (0.74%) Torrence Campton (Social Foundation Party) 69 (0.22%) John Sivalil (Natural Law Party) 44 (0.14%) C maj 1,227 (3.85%) 2,633 swing C to Lab Electorate 73,228; Turnout 31,908 (43.57% -31.08%)

— Anthony Bevis

Blair welcomes measures to make Europe's jobless more employable

European leaders ended their special summit on the jobs crisis last night after signing up to a modest package of measures aimed at making workers more "employable".

Agreement on the package, which sceptics doubt will radically or immediately alter the plight of Europe's 18 million unemployed, was seized on by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to enhance his claim that Britain is leading in Europe.

The outcome he said "signals a new direction for Europe". The focus was now on "people's priorities", on the need for skills training, and on reforming the economic environment to allow businesses to hire more workers.

"We are moving away from the idea that you can pass laws to create jobs" he said. But the package agreed falls

well short of any endorsement of British-style labour market flexibility. Heads of government committed themselves to new employment action plans which will be assessed collectively on an annual basis under a new "name-and-shame" style procedure.

The first results will be vetted when the 15 leaders meet in Cardiff next June, under the British presidency of the European Union. But the strategies for attaining a series of broad objectives will remain strictly in national hands.

Most leaders are still deeply sceptical about embracing the American or British model, which they claim has exacerbated inequalities and created millions of part-time and low-paid jobs.

Mr Blair nevertheless claimed strong backing on the

need for reform of the inflexible European social model from the Danes, the Dutch, the Italians, the Luxembourgers and the Spaniards. And it was clear that a majority also rejected the left-wing French government's demands for interventionism and centrally planned targets.

Britain, the Prime Minister said, would use its EU presidency to intensify the push for a "middle way". This he said rejected wholesale deregulation but also rejected the interventionism and corporatism associated with what he called "the old left".

The employment package enshrines a pledge to increase training opportunities to tackle youth and long-term unemployment. Only about 10 per cent of the unemployed are currently in training and the leaders agreed that the objective

should be to increase this, not to the 25 per cent sought by the French and the European Commission, but to a less ambitious target of 20 per cent.

They agreed that every unemployed young person should be offered a new start within six months of being on the dole, in the form of training or work experience, but jettisoned proposals that this would have to be done within five years.

Spain, where 42 per cent of under-25s are unemployed, protested that it could not realistically deliver this target so the deadline was dropped from the final conclusions.

Backing was also written into the agreement for a European Commission plan to reduce VAT on labour-intensive industries.

— Katherine Butler
Luxembourg

Labour rejects benefit cut claims

Labour's commitment to fairness and opportunity for the disabled was repeated yesterday in the face of speculation about swingeing cuts in benefits. With scare stories being put about, Anthony Bevis reports on the welfare reform battlefield.

A report that Disability Living Allowance, currently claimed by about 1.8 million disabled people, might be switched to local councils to finance community care — as part of an attempt to make savings on the £23bn disability benefits bill — was rejected by a senior government source last night.

But with the entire welfare programme currently under

review, ministers are reluctant to play the game of responding to speculative scares.

But Alistair Darling, Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Government's spending axeman, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "The conclusion of this review will not be published until the middle of next year and it will be entirely consistent with our manifesto and will also be consistent with our principles of fairness and opportunity."

He confirmed that Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security, and Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, had been in contact with disability groups over the past few weeks.

"My colleagues have been exploring how we can use the New Deal to get people into work," Mr Darling said.

"It is quite clear that people

supported us because we were prepared to review government spending right across the board and to ensure that we can get the priorities people want."

He added: "This government's priority is to get as many people off benefits and into work, so they can create opportunities for themselves and their families and that is what we are determined to do."

Fred Heddell, the chief executive of Mencap, said: "We are well aware that the Government is thinking the unthinkable and we have taken the lead in helping them to identify the implications of 'possible' changes."

"The reality is that disabled people have low incomes and high expenses."

"Ministers know this and we think it unlikely that this government will want to destroy what its predecessors created."

The facts are against them and the public will be against them.

"For a severely disabled person not in employment total benefit levels are a small fraction of the earnings that the non-disabled worker takes for granted. Taking disability is taxing property."

Iain Duncan Smith, the Conservatives' social security spokesman, said: "The new tax on the most vulnerable in society would not only break Labour's pledge not to levy new taxes, but confirm that new Labour says one thing and does another."

For the Liberal Democrats, Paul Burstow, the MP for Sutton and Cheam, said: "Disabled people are already alarmed and the Government must come to the House and set out their intentions. They cannot hide behind a blizzard of reviews."

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Ambitious, anxious, cynical, frustrated. Now our readers pass verdict on their generation

Many readers have responded to our Young Britain series. Some are concerned about a future dominated by careers, while others think that although they work hard they can play hard too. Here are some of their thoughts.

Work

I am 22 and work in a busy city centre hotel in Birmingham whilst my wife attends university as a post-graduate student of archaeology and despite the fact that we both work extremely hard we are still able to add understand the need to relax, or to use a "yooofemism", chill out.

It seems that my generation is able to combine this with busy work lives more effectively and perhaps more productively than any of our predecessors.

Ben Westwood

West Midlands

PS: I think your cannabis campaign is the best thing since king-size Rizla.

As I spent the third year of my four-year modern languages course abroad many of my friends have graduated and are out there in the "real world". When I returned I was amazed to find how many creative, artistic people with first-class degrees from the country's supposedly top university (Cambridge) were now working ridiculous hours for ridiculous money in the City.

They included the kind of people who considered themselves vaguely trendy and alternative and were still wearing the nose rings and ethnic jumpers from their gap year well into the second year.

Every week *Marsity*, letterboxes and noticeboards all round the university are filled with information on recruitment for banking, corporate finance, marketing and management consultancy. These are, apparently, the only options if you want a "career" these days.

I am just a little concerned to know where my generation's voices or leaders are going to appear from. As your survey seems to be revealing, my generation is one that craves, above all, stability, conformity and financial reward.

Does nobody grow up wanting to save the world anymore? Eleanor Watson, 22
Gonville & Caius College
Cambridge

One of the most recent and striking differences of the day, in contrast to 10 years ago, is the "work experience" ethic.

To land even an interview at any of the blue-chip graduate training schemes, a thorough work experience programme has to be illustrated.

This is all very well but one has to be extremely lucky at 18 years of age to know what direction you want a career.

I also understand the logic of companies demanding work experience but a student has to be very fortunate to actually glean something from the placement rather than gain a sparkling aptitude for photocopying. Zoe Woolfson, 23
Hendon
London

Stress

To reach demanding goals, young people now have to give more and increase the pace of their lives. According to these demands, this generation is disciplined and hard-working but without it share of flair, fun and frivolity. Although, perhaps unlike other generations, they are aware to the fact that these need to be juggled with serious purposes.

In a world of intense competition, what has arisen is not just a "can do" generation but a "must do" and "need to do" generation, as teenagers recognise the necessity of working now to gain security and stability in the future. However, academic grades are no longer a guarantee of university places or job opportunities. Employ-



A halfway house between America and Europe

Sensible, hardworking, decent, tolerant, interested in families and lifestyle rather than politics and world affairs – it has been an attractive and encouraging portrait of Britain's youth which has been examined in this newspaper over the past week. But how well will this generation – to judge by the attitudes it seems to hold – be fitted to the changes which will take place in the world during the next quarter century?

Try some tests. Let's lump the forces for change that will affect this country into five groups – demography, the environment, globalism, technology, and government/society – and see how prepared the next generation is for change.

Start with demography, for the ageing of all developed countries will be one of the most pervasive forces driving change. Britain happens to be ageing rather more slowly than countries in continental Europe, in the sense that the proportion of over 65s will grow more slowly than elsewhere. But the fact remains that a smaller generation of people of working age will have to support a larger number of pensioners. So there will be great pressure on the present generation of young people to be in work all their lives, save for their own retirement, and almost certainly retire later.

Looking at the responses of the survey, it looks as though this message has already struck home. Many young people are already in some kind of part-time work while they carry on their studies, adopting the US model of the labour market rather than the Continental one. One of our headlines during the week suggested that it was "All work and no play in the stressful Nineties". Demographic forces alone will see to it that this generation will be kept hard at work – but at least it seems prepared for this.

The next 25 years will certainly see rising concern about the damage that we are doing to the environment. Here there seems to be a gap between what they say and what they do – a trait not unique to the young. The young talk pale green, but only pale: Swampy is not a hero. One of the most striking features was the love of the young for the car and in particular the freedom it brought. If the successor to the internal combustion engine comes along in the next

comfortable with technology, for this is the generation which is witnessing a sudden leap forward in the electronic technologies – technologies which will transform the workplace over the next generation. They own a lot of electronic kit, for a start: CD players, home computers and the like. They also recognise one of the key changes that technology is likely to bring, more people working from home. There was little or no fear of the ways in which technology might be malign.

Finally government and society. Here it is much harder to be certain about the answers were the lottery, taxing high earners, raising taxes on business and selling off public services. Less than a quarter wanted a rise in income tax, and only 13 per cent a rise in VAT. One disappointment that the young may have to face is that they will have to pay higher taxation even to support the level of services they at present experience, and which they don't think are good enough.

But maybe there will be other big changes in society which reduce the burden on the Welfare State. One of the most interesting responses was the extent to which the young value family life. Most want to get married, though they are not judgmental towards people who do not, such as single parents (though many think it should be made harder to get divorced).

Top worry is unemployment, but that is closely followed by drugs and crime. The young want families; they want order. But they want it without the strong moral overtones evident in the US – though two-thirds think of themselves as Christian.

To generalise, it is as though our young have become American in their economic attitudes (get a job, work hard and enjoy spending the rewards) but European in their social attitudes (accept a big role for government, and be generally liberal in their attitudes to others). And maybe that is where these people will take the country: to a half-way place between America and continental Europe, reflecting some features of each society but being different from either. It is not a bad model, and certainly makes for an interesting Britain a generation hence.

Thus when asked how the government should raise additional money the top four nature of change. We can be sure of demographic change, of rising environmental concerns and so on. But what happens to government and to society is not only less clear; it crucially depends on the attitudes of the next generation of voters, like the young who answer these surveys.

As far as attitudes to government go, there is a clear demand that more attention should be paid to education and the health service. This can either be interpreted as support for policies of the Liberal Democrats, the only party which said it would raise tax at the last election, or that the young show the same pattern as their parents, saying they want more money spent, but not more tax to fund it.

Technology: unsurprisingly the young are

couple of decades, the young will doubtless welcome it. But they will still want to travel in cars and planes.

Globalism seems to be taken as a given: a process which is inevitable and should be welcomed in its many forms. Nationalism, certainly in its more aggressive forms, seems on the wane. The young have no truck with racism, accepting that one aspect of globalism means people working in different countries. As for the impact of globalism on jobs, the young seem to accept that international competition will mean that jobs will inevitably be less secure. But their response is to try to increase their skills and be flexible about changing jobs, rather than think that globalism should be reversed.

Education

A load of young people are misinformed at school that to get ahead in life they must have a degree. Once they do, the world will be their oyster. Education, education, education has got me a job as a receptionist. Why? because I chose an arts degree. No one in the business world wants to know, yet school and university misinformed me that it didn't matter what degree I did, the fact that I could do one would be enough. And I'm not

wasted three years of my life. The number of students pouring out of universities every year with non-vocational arts degrees terrifies and saddens me – I see them as wasted lives. I hope I can persuade some to think again. CG
Name and address withheld

As someone who was a teenager in the supposedly halcyon 60s, I have to say that I simply don't recognise the blasé approach to

university entrance. The pressure to get good grades, for those who did aspire, was always intense – beginning at primary school as one faced up to the 11-plus. I remember only too well the "hribes" handed out by some parents to their children in the hope that they would pass this all-important exam, and the tears when some of them – the majority – didn't. Then, as now, some children cracked under the pressure. Many more learned at a pitifully early age not to aspire to any form of higher education or any kind of "good job" at all.

So, please, balance up the findings. An honest appraisal of history might actually indicate that, in terms of opportunities, today's generation have never had it so good. Janet Rider (Mrs)
Haywards Heath

Environment

The car is the perfect vehicle for a generation lost in the cultural maelstrom of job insecurity, alienating work and very little influence over society. Car is all. It is a hobby, a craft, with a great deal of work satisfaction, and it is the home from home in which we socialise away from discerning observation and through the combination of

work and home we do become adults.

We have become alienated from our environment, both social and agricultural. It is an incarceration.

To our credit, we are intelligent enough to bypass Swampy: his political oafery and Luddite regressiveness have only served as ammunition against those of us who would like to see industrialisation without the unnecessary pillaging of finite environmental resources.

Yet, we are immature enough to revel in self-gratification, to lubricate ourselves in short-term rewards, to steal ourselves a quick moment of relief although we are ultimately shagging society. Let down, cynical, we race through life and are now heading for a crash. Brendan Montague
Cricklewood, London NW

When most people of my age couldn't care less about the environment and the future of this planet, I do. I am working flat out in my area to "Save the Planet".

I have greased our home; we recycle glass, paper, cans and aluminium foil from food and milk bottle tops. The family has drastically cut its car use by increased walking, cycling and use

of public transport. We have a dozen energy-efficient light bulbs and also saver plugs on our fridge and freezer. We actively try and cut down our waste when shopping and buy environmentally sound washing powder and washing up liquid.

Gad! you're crying, I bet this eco-saint drives though, doesn't he? Well, no, actually. At 17 I chose not to learn to drive on environmental grounds.

It is very sad that the majority of young people are committing the crime of apathy. We will have our entire lives dominated by environmental issues – and the devastating consequences of our current lack of interest. If this is the attitude of young Britain – a shallow, materialistic, selfish and characterless monoculture, then God help us. DAVID RYAN
Shrewsbury

Lifestyle

I am twenty-one and have been house bound and often bedridden with severe ME for three years.

I don't feel that being an ill person is my whole identity but my hopes and fears and opinions have been affected by the position I am in. While other young people perhaps have jobs at the top of their agenda, I have to consider the fact that I might be reliant upon the benefit system for the rest of my life. Will I receive enough benefit to live on? Will I be able to get sheltered housing? Who will look after me when my parents are no longer able to?

As far as relationships go, I do have a boyfriend, but for us to be committed in my present state would be expecting a huge amount from him. I worry that I won't be able to sustain a relationship. I'm also aware that in the meantime, and possibly in the long term, children are just not an option.

I understand that young people who are ill are not in the majority but we do exist. We are part of the future too. Martha Courtney
London W5 7RF

Like a hungry man who finally eats, *The Independent* gorged itself on Britain's youth. They had their very own page for one week. Generalisation, gaps and oversimplifications aside, Young Britain was at least a nod to young people.

But what happens next? Back on the diet of consumer news I expect. Appealing to salaried, mortgaged individuals which the majority of under-25s are not?

Rachna Persad, 24
London

Tomorrow may belong to us, but I don't think I want to go there. It seems a curious mix of New Right morality and the New Labour work ethic.

We need "Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll". If that sounds like a cliché, maybe we need to reinvent it.

But when did it all get so serious? Why do we want to become our parents, only worse? Ian Corbett, 21
Runcorn, Cheshire

Do those surveyed belong to a cult of Liberal Democrats living in a retreat making effigies of Paddy Ashdown? I tried to spot an individual (remember? daring, wild, a little dangerous ... sorry, forgot) amongst your ragbag of socially, morally, ecologically, asexually correct respondents. But – oh, no – these carefree, rebellious spirits are too busy planning for the future, families and God knows what else. Let me ask. When do you think your "Young Britaines" are going to hit the boredom threshold? Perhaps they are the boredom threshold? I suspect Mary Whitehouse has been filling in questionnaires and loading the result.

Of course there is another possibility. YOU HAVE BEEN DUPED, CONNED. Your survey has shown that Young Britain are a bunch of liars. They know it. They've had a good old laugh about it whilst popping a pill and getting hammered.

Ed Funnell, 24

THE INDEPENDENT

Young Britain. The truth. Starts today

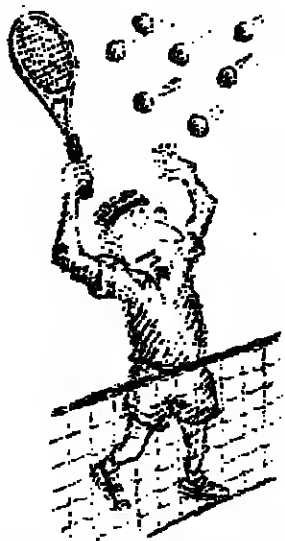


alone – I know plenty of others who did non-vocational degrees who are in the same predicament as me.

I am so angry and so disillusioned. When I called some graduate agencies to change my job recently, they rudely informed me that I had just

employment attributed to my generation. Certainly it was easier to find employment after completing a degree course – but, then, it was much harder to get on to a degree course in the first place. Only the top handful of the state grammar school I attended ever applied to uni-

Where's
the future of
business?



46 million hits. Even Pete Sampras couldn't cope with that. But the website for Roland Garros 97 did. Designed by IBM, the site was conceived using scalable technology to anticipate massive traffic peaks.

FACT

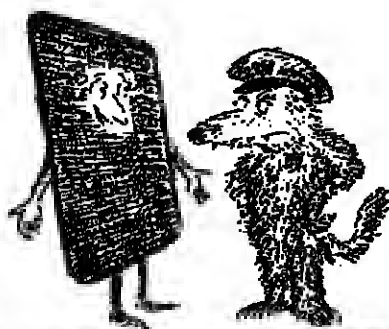
The cost of processing a traditional airline ticket is about £5. The cost of processing an e-ticket is around 62p.



With a projected 175 million people connected to the Web three years from now, customers will need travel no further than across their living room to purchase all kinds of goods and services. This year, 55 million potential customers already can. (Source: IDC/LINK)

FACT

Can you have too many customers? Actually, yes. If your Web site has the technology to handle only 4 million visitors and 8 million turn up, you can lose a lot of potential customers forever. Which is why scalability is a major issue. Scalability is simply the ability to let your website grow to handle more visitors, more complicated services, and intense traffic peaks. All IBM servers have built-in scalability.



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Electronic businesses. Using the Internet to find new customers, doing business in new and better ways.

A recent survey indicates that more than 80% of Europe's retail companies are either running e-business projects or plan to do so.

e-business is the future of commerce.

Tens of thousands of businesses, maybe including yours, are adding www addresses to their regular addresses. But what does this change?

It depends. An information-only website, little more than a glorified brochure, is hardly going to set your sales figures on fire. The serious players are already selling stuff over the Internet. Companies love the economics of it, customers love the convenience.

Clearly, e-business is taking off. IBM's role lies in helping businesses do it profitably.

A study by the Meta Group predicts that goods purchased on-line worldwide will grow from £6 billion

for specific customer segments. It can also gather valuable and meaningful information from every order to form the basis of marketing statistics. The sole distributor of Shimano bicycle components in Italy, MIC, uses Net.Commerce to link 4,000 retailers and share marketing information.

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Solutions for a small planet



Photograph: Kalpesh Lashiga

Coward wrote a show for her, she's played Sondheim and Albee and Tennessee Williams. Woody Allen gave her a cameo in his latest film ... tomorrow she sings in London

Elaine Stritch, the grand old dame of Broadway, asks David Benedict: who are you calling elderly?

Elaine Stritch has just arrived in London to stay at her beloved Savoy Hotel, where she lived for 14 years. Greeting her, the nervous press rep remarks that one of the elderly porters still remembers her. "Elderly?" she growls, with a look that could halt a stampede, before guffawing with laughter. She's on a roll. Turning to her producer, her unique grouchy voice brimming with comic sweetness and wicked threat, she rasps: "Next time, could you get me a driver who's less than 105 years old?" The first part of her journey from New York was fine, thank you. Travelling by Concorde reminds her of gracious living, a time when people actually dressed to fly. Then came the car journey. "That driver... Leslie, his name was. Do you know what he said to me? He looked in the mirror and said, 'Oh, Miss Stritch... are you still working?' Well! So I say to him, 'Will you pull over please, Leslie? I'm afraid, with what I've got to say to you, you shouldn't be driving.' Unbelievable!"

You had to be there. It's all in the tone. Horsing around, the blissful timing beneath that thrilling baritone growl, it's a

performance, and she plays her audience like a harp. Which is why she's here. Tomorrow night she's a guest at the 70th birthday party of her old friend, the equally gifted performer Barbara Cook. It will be a quiet affair: just Cook, Stritch, Maria Friedman, Tommy Korberg, Michel Legrand, conductor/arranger Wally Harper, the Royal Philharmonic and an audience of 5,000 at the Royal Albert Hall. There are only two words to describe it: be there.

The last time London heard her sing was in 1972, when she starred as the beady-eyed hush, Joanne, in the original cast of Sondheim's *Company*. She knocked 'em dead mixing pain and disdain in "The Ladies Who Lunch" and no one has been able to erase her reading. She got reviews to die for and stayed, nothing up more raves in *Small Craft Warnings*, Tennessee Williams' play set in a bar-room of broken dreams. Her barnstorming performance moved critic Peter Ansorge to write: "Rarely has the London theatre seen a performance of such intensity, such whip-lash drive, such virtuosity, such pure theatrical magic." Not bad for someone who made her debut in the 1948 revue *Angel in the Wings* introducing the song: "Bongo, bongo, hongo. I don't want to leave the Congo..."

Having stood by for Ethel

Merman in *Call Me Madam* (she never went on), she left a showstopping role in *Pal Joey* to do the Merman part on tour and never looked back. When they needed a climactic 11 o'clock number for the revival of *On Your Toes*, Richard Rodgers gave her his entire back catalogue to choose from. Noël Coward caught her in the flop musical *Goldilocks* and wrote *Sail Away* just for her.

She has made only 12 movies but wants to do more, having just completed *Out to Sea* with former drama-school classmate Walter Matthau. The ex-convent girl cracks up at the mere mention of her 1956 debut. "It was one terrible film called *The Scarlet Hour*. Oh, Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Some asshole asked me what I thought about my performance in that and I said I thought I looked like I was visiting the set. And I did! I would come in, and there was this deep mystery going on with Carol Ohmart and she's sittin' by the pool and she's murdered somebody and I don't even know what the fuck is going on, and my line would be 'Hi!'" Her raucous laughter rings round the room. "It was like they were on a break and I was EG Marshall's friend come to say 'hello' to everybody. It had absolutely nothing to do with the plot and all I did was change my costumes and gasp. 'You're kidding!'"

She was the only good thing in the stodgy, stately 1957 remake of *A Farewell to Arms* and 20 years later she was coolly as-tringent as Dirk Bogarde's mistress in *Providence*. Last Friday, at the last minute, she stepped in to do a cameo in her second Woody Allen movie. "It's a very naughty part. He said, 'You wanna do this? You wanna talk dirty?' I said, 'Lemme see it.' I was scared to death. I didn't know what he was going to send me. I said, 'I'll swing naked from the chandelier if it's justified.' Well, on second thoughts, I won't. I'm afraid of heights."

It turned out to be a tough assignment. "Now, I can learn lines crack-jack. Four pages in one day in addition to costume fittings and everything, fine, but learning and playing it that fast? I got to the set and had Geena Davis and Bebe Neuwirth to work with and champagne to pour and the lines went clean out of my head. Woody said to me, 'Elaine, if you make a mistake, just keep going.' But I can't. If I make a mistake, reality goes out the window."

That's what Stritch gives you. High-definition reality. In last year's knockout Broadway revival of Albee's *A Delicate Balance*, she played the hard-bitten, wisecracking alcoholic sister. Stritch has been dry for over 10 years, but was a major drinker in her time, which lent her per-

formance a shocking emotional depth beneath a brilliant comic surface. She worked four separate laughs on a single line, none of which were cheap gags to please an audience. "Comedy timing has to be instinctive," she pronounces; "if it isn't, you're dead." Her instincts led her to paint a hilarious, heart-breaking portrait of a woman not waving but drowning.

Stritch is prized as someone who can slay and enslave an audience, but she doesn't see it that way. "There's a big difference between playing to an audience and with an audience," she says. Deftly switching the conversation away from herself, she tries to explain Barbara Cook's quality. "She swallows an audience. It isn't a matter of dedication. When she sings, she belongs entirely to them. There isn't ego in it, there's a kind of assurance. You've gotta have the guts to walk out there, but it's not 'Hey, get a load of me.' It's 'I got this song and you gotta understand what it means because I just love it.' She has humility on stage."

Some of Stritch's former, slightly bruised working partners might balk at that "humility" part - this self-styled feisty broad made her student stage debut as a tiger - but she could be describing herself. That self-assurance, which most obviously manifests itself through humour, is a front. She has al-

ways been scared. "Every director worth his salt knows that," she says quietly. She started acting to get out of herself. That also explains the drinking. "Drinking was about giving me the guts to put one foot in front of the other, to get out of this state of fear in the first place. And I'm a crafty sonofabitch. I over-overshot the runway." In 50 years, she has missed only one performance.

That was when Coward combined her role with that of the lead in *Sail Away* during the Philadelphia try-out. "I had Sunday and Monday to learn her part and all her songs. I went on and I was terrific. The next night I couldn't talk. Noël said to me, 'You had four Heinekens in the Variety Club last night. Stritch, that's why you weren't on.' Jesus Christ! If you don't deserve four lousy Heinekens after that..."

She once told Cleo Laine she couldn't get over her vocal range. "You've got 18,000 octaves. I've got about four notes." Laine replied: "But what you do with those four notes." Even on disc you can feel that expressive quality; live, it's something else. Her ever-present terror turns to radiant heat. It's heavily disguised, but her truthful vulnerability is what makes audiences worship her.

Elaine Stritch: 5pm tomorrow, Royal Albert Hall (0171-589 8212)

All for love, and nothing for reward

Frank McGuinness' *'Mutability'*
Royal National Theatre
Reviewed by Paul Taylor

The first new play to appear under Trevor Nunn's directorship of the National Theatre has a dream cast: you consequently spend most of the evening wondering how you could go about air-lifting them to safety from this ambitious but embarrassing mess of a play. "Aye, we have indeed fallen from a great height," declares Maeve, the legendary Irish queen (Frances Tomelty). In Frank McGuinness' *Mutability*, set in 1598, Maeve spearheads a tattered band of refugee royals roaming the bleak Hibernian forests and plotting revenge against the English Protestant settlers whose chief representative is the poet of *The Faerie Queene*, and colonial administrator, Edmund Spenser.

The same downward plunge seems to have been taken by McGuinness, who in 1985 gave the world the best Irish anti-war play since Sean O'Casey's *Silver*

McGuinness even gives a speculative twist to the fact that the Spenser home was burnt to the ground. Here, this is presented as both external reprisal and the self-inflicted conclusion of the poet's own sense of failure.

There are things that stop any of this having a proper impact, that make it difficult to watch with a straight face. The traverse production is played on a rocky set that resembles the décor of some naff studio TV play of the Sixties. The music is overdone: those sweetly mournful Irish pipes seem more intent on making the play feel less "feel bad" than on conveying cultural identity. And there's a perfectly excruciating attempt to drag Shakespeare (played by Anton Lesser) into all of this. The idea is that, feeling burnt-out by his "pursuit of fire", and a closet Catholic to boot, the Bard has come across to Ireland (cue lots of echoes of Prospero's Island) and is promptly mistaken for the promised redeemer by Aisling O'Sullivan's glowering intense Irish poetess, who helps him out in the impromptu creation of one of his



Tassie. The artistic intentions of this new piece are wholly laudable. The author, brought up a Catholic, wants to get inside the historically-shaped psyche of both camps, bringing out points of troubling resemblance and equally troubling difference between the two mentalities.

To that end, he shows Patrick Malahide's impressively unravelling Spenser torn between ruthlessness and pitifulty for and patronising prejudice towards the stricken, dispossessed and sometimes massacred natives. Stuck in this outpost with an embittered, terminally homesick wife (intelligently played by Diana Hardcastle), he finds his devotion to the myth and ideology of Elizabeth/Gloriana, the Virgin Queen, beginning to verge on mad desperation.

more famous sonnets. The play's conception of genius is breathtakingly shallow and corny, as is its idea of a divided, half-tragic, half-hopeful ending. The latter is provided by Edmund Spenser's little boy, who, in the climactic fire, gets separated from his parents and winds up becoming the healing replacement for the Irish poetess's dead baby. My, how swiftly this tot adapts to changing circumstances. As he greets his own Irish family, you half expect him to say, "And now, pretty please, nice people, teach me Gaelic and all about your fascinating culture." He's a phoney bridge in a deeply disappointing and badly misjudged start to Trevor Nunn's new regime.

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THE WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

BBC Radio - the serial killer

They used to play a game on *I'm Sorry, I Haven't a Clue* - now back on Radio 4, just in time for its telegram from the Queen - based on the idea that, in order to save money, the BBC was having to make cut-price versions of the classics: so Kafka's *The Castle* would become *The Bungalow*, Sartre's *Nausea* would become *Mild Indigestion*, and so on.

This stopped being funny after a while, partly because most jokes on *I'm Sorry, I Haven't a Clue* do stop being funny after while, partly because truth caught up with satire. Once upon a time, a decent-sized 19th-century novel facing dramatisation on Radio 4 could expect at least six or seven hour-long episodes. Lately, though, classic serials have shrunk drastically - even, annoyingly, to one part.

So it's something of a shock to find that the new *Classic Serial*, *War and Peace* (R4, Sun), is getting 10 whole episodes - not a lot for one of the genuine heavyweights of the Western canon, maybe, but after what we've grown used to, it looks positively epic.

Sadly, it sounds puny. One

reason is that the adapters - Marcy Kahan and Mike Walker - have decided to dispense with the authorial voice, the omniscient narrator who hoists us from one scene to another and offers comments on the characters. Admittedly, the device is often over-used in radio serials, as a narrative short-cut, or as a get-out for the adaptor who can't think of a way of dramatising some psychological crux. But I'd rather be fed facts piecemeal by a narrator than have them forced into the dialogue like corn into a goose. Kahan and Walker haven't actually found new ways of dramatising feelings, they've just converted slices of authorial narrative into internal monologues, so giving Tolstoy's characters an implausible degree of insight into themselves.

It all makes things feel rather cramped and inward-looking. So does the score, with its pooling martial trumpets and blatantly synthesised strings, summoning up with brilliant clarity images of a man in a studio with a stack of computers. Meanwhile, listening to the Russian army drilling, you get the distinct impression

that General Kutuzov is planning to bluff Napoleon's triumphant troops with a couple of men stamping on boxes of gravel. Location recording has not helped much, either - a slight echo is no substitute for a genuine sense of place, or variety of acoustic.

It's all rather frustrating, especially since the failure of this serial will probably be used as justification for shorter, less complex classic serials in future.

More dumbing-down on Radio 3, meanwhile. The evening the Booker shortlist was announced, a presenter suggested that all Radio 3 listeners would naturally be rooting for Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes* - because it had a musical theme. And on Thursday's *Musical Encounters*, John Toal offered the fact that Poulenc was once a typist as an excuse for playing - "as a tribute to Poulenc and to dactylographs, dactylographers or pierodactyls everywhere" - *The Typist* (which you may know as the theme for *The News Quiz*). If I wanted weak-minded facetiousness and half-hearted populism, I'd be listening to Henry Kelly already.

THE INDEPENDENT

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سكنا من الامم

There are some secrets that Mr Straw is right to reveal



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For the second time in two weeks, we come to praise the Home Secretary. Last week, we congratulated Jack Straw on learning French – all right, so he is only doing it to talk about gypsies and hooligans to his continental colleagues, but it makes him a more rounded person anyway. Today, we cheer him on in his battle to force judges, lawyers and police officers to declare their membership of the Freemasons.

Not that *The Independent* has anything particularly against masons. People do much stranger things than shake hands in funny ways and roll up their trouser legs in private. And they do much worse things than raise money for charity. One teenager asked his father what Freemasons actually do. "It's a secret," came the reply. "But if you promise not to tell anyone, I'll tell you: we give a lot of money to the blind."

Masonry is not always so benign, of course, and so Mr Straw is right to principle to take a hard line in favour of disclosure. There are enough documented cases of masonic links in corruption, especially in local government, to justify action. They can operate in a malign way, discussing police and government busi-

ness in private caucus. And yet, that said, freemasonry is being elevated to an importance it does not deserve, the predictable focus of left-liberal conspiracy theorising. The trouble is, in part, that the power of other less-explicitly-secret networks is being overlooked.

There are secretive societies housed in unmarked buildings in London that are more influential than any bunch of leg-harers. They go by strange codenames, Garrick's, White's and Traveller's, and are known as "gentlemen's clubs". Are we to legislate for disclosure of membership of them? Business, legitimate and otherwise, is carried out privately in golf clubs, tennis clubs and gyms. Judges, lawyers and police officers may be members. Should they have to disclose that?

We are all, save for the most dysfunctional, members of networks of mutual support of varying degrees of secrecy or openness. Such networks may not be as widespread as masonry, but they are all mechanisms, witting or unwitting, for social exclusion, for dividing humanity into ins and outs. Any club induces in non-members the paranoia of the playground, of social exclusion and the fear: "Are they talking about me?"



Careers can be advanced and blocked by membership of all kinds of society. There is the society of office smokers, who conspire in the fag-room. There is the fraternity of after-hours drinkers. There are networks based on family, culture, language, sex, sexuality and football. There

are societies which should perhaps be more secret than they are, such as that of Manchester United supporters. But all are bound by ties of loyalty, common interest or shared hostility.

We must be vigilant about secret and semi-secret societies. Conspiracy is a human trait which needs to be constantly attacked. But it is foolish to pretend that we are, or could be, an atomised gas-cloud of individuals, making clinical and disinterested judgements. There is a clear line to draw in the cases of masonic lodges and Opus Dei, the secretive Roman Catholic society. These are organisations which have secrecy written into their articles of association. That would be fine for a darts club, and no one should be too excited about Freemasons or Jesuits in most of life's broad avenues. But in government, local and national, these things are different. And when it comes to judges, magistrates, Crown prosecutors and senior police officers – entrusted with the impartial administration of justice – harder tests apply. It would be interesting to know what arguments Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, is deploying in resisting a compulsory register for new appointments and a voluntary

one for existing office-holders in the legal system. It is doubtful whether he is putting the high-minded case for freedom of association in civil society. It is more likely that the judges have got on their high horse, resenting any suggestion that their integrity could be impugned. If so, they should watch the Prime Minister's interview on television last Sunday, which was a classic example of a politician answering a different question to the one asked. The question was whether anyone might think it was possible for Mr Blair to have his judgement influenced by a large donation. He pleaded, passionately and sincerely, that he was incapable of being so influenced. But it was his assertion against the "appearance of a conflict of interest" – the intangible charge against him that could only have been dispelled by early and complete disclosure.

The more intelligent of judges might oppose Mr Straw's plans because they recognise the danger that, after secret societies, it will be their membership of gentlemen's clubs and their tax returns that will have to be disclosed. But generally, the resistance isn't philosophy. It's the special pleading of a vested interest, and Mr Straw is right to lean his shoulder against it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Children in care

Sir: The Utting report (19 November) raises the question of how children in care can be enabled to communicate distress to the outside world and be heard. Our research into this matter gives strong support for the employment of independent visitors to act as advocates for all children who are looked after away from home, whether in foster or residential care.

For a variety of reasons, welfare professionals do not always hold the needs of individual children in mind, and the children we have interviewed place a high value on adults who, like a solicitor, take down their instructions and carry them out, without interpretation or manipulation. The Government should give each looked-after child access to an independent advocate as a matter of right.

STEVE FARNFIELD
Lecturer in Social Work
Reading University

Sir: As a trustee of SOS Children's Villages UK, I have seen for myself the results of child care based on a model created nearly 50 years ago in Austria. It has been described as the next best thing to a natural family. Children are cared for by a surrogate mother in family-sized houses grouped together to form the village which in turn is part of the wider community. This care is continuous and secure until children can stand on their own two feet and includes ensuring they have the skills and education to enable them to fulfil their potential. There are, for example, six students from SOS Children's Villages at university in the UK at the moment.

This model of child care – homes for children, not children's homes – is working successfully in more than 120 countries around the world. Ironically, about 20 years ago, SOS Children's Villages UK was told that this form of child care would not work here. Perhaps it is time to reconsider that decision?

ANGELA CHADWICK-HEALEY
Trustee
SOS Children's Villages UK
Cambridge

Sir: Your leading article (20 November) rightly identifies the importance of a move towards uniform standards in child care services as the best bulwark against future failures.

For foster care services, which now provide care for two-thirds of all children looked after by local authorities, that move is already under way. The Department of Health and the Scottish Office have recently agreed funding for an 18-month initiative to define and promote national standards for foster care, to ensure consistency of care for children, whichever local authority is responsible for their safety and development.

The UK Joint Working Party on Foster Care brings together, for the first time at a national level, directors of social

services and family placement practitioners, foster carers, researchers and representatives of the social services inspectorates, local government associations and voluntary organisations.

If this work can be combined with the regulation and inspection of all foster care agencies as recommended in the Utting Report, it should go a long way towards ensuring a high standard of care for some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

PAUL VERTY
Policy and Service Manager
National Foster Care
Association
London SE1

Sir: Sir William Utting's report highlights the continuing need for greater vigilance in relation to bad practice and child abuse. He emphasises also the importance of properly supervised residential care as being the best form of provision for many vulnerable children. For too long the pendulum has swung away from residential care and too many good homes and therapeutic communities have been closed. Recent inquiries and prosecutions have quite properly highlighted the various abuses in residential settings. Such abuses, however, have had the rather sad effect of tarnishing the image of the entire sector. The wonderful care and professional commitment provided by staff in many residential homes for children has been overshadowed by bad practice.

The previous Utting report on residential care and a number of other significant national reports have highlighted the lack of provision for the needs of residential workers. These have long been neglected. We urge the Government and local authorities to act with considered haste, and respond positively to the current Utting report – for the sake of our most vulnerable children, and for the staff whose training, supervision and encouragement is crucial to their care.

SIMON RODWAY
LADY MOSER
DEREK MARSHALL
The Caldecott Foundation
Ashford, Kent

US and Iraq

Sir: For forty years, the USSR ("the evil empire") maintained a large armoury of weapons of mass destruction. That they were ever used is due to the possession by the West of adequate deterrents. We still have such weapons, so it hardly seems necessary to maintain indefinitely teams of inspectors in Iraq in the hope of detecting every last Petri dish that might contain a biological culture (report, 21 November).

One suspects that the real US agenda is to continue sanctions on the Iraqi people and thereby to maintain a state of tension in the Gulf. This ensures American hegemony over the western Gulf oil producers and satisfies the Congress lobbies.

CHARLES HUGHES
Felixstowe, Suffolk



Eamon de Valera: sent the Dublin Fire Brigade to Belfast

Photograph: Maxwells

Irish war record

Sir: John Alderson (Letters, 19 November) should not perpetuate the myth that German U-boats sailed in Irish waters freely to attack convoys in the Western Approaches whilst the Royal Navy was denied use of ports in the then Irish Free State.

Southern Ireland served the Allied cause best by remaining strictly neutral under the Geneva Convention. Many Irishmen joined the British forces not for a pair of boots and to enjoy a "bit of a fight", but to assist in the effort to destroy the evils of Fascism, and were allowed to do so freely by the Irish government.

The city lights of Dublin were switched off at 11pm during the war, as I remember, so did not exactly provide a beacon for bombers over Merseyside and Glasgow. On the contrary, the RAF bent the German radar beam which brought the raiders over Dublin, bombing the North Strand and South Circular Road on two occasions, caus-

ing serious loss of life. Hardly a friendly act by either side towards a neutral country! It should not be forgotten that when Belfast was blitzed Eamon de Valera authorised the Dublin Fire Brigade to be despatched to that city to assist in quenching the fires and helping the injured.

J C B HILL
Bridport, West Dorset

Sir: C T Rason (Letters, 19 November) claims 25 "northern" against 13 "southern" Irish battalions in the battle of the Somme. Working with the possibility that he is counting as "northern" nationalist battalions raised in the six counties of what is now Northern Ireland, the figures available to me, based on county, regimental and divisional designations, are: Nationalist: 15; Unionist: 13; indeterminate: 8; raised outside Ireland: 4.

It would seem that he is claiming at least two of the extra-Ireland battalions, Guards and London Irish, as "northern", which renders hollow the

integrity of his classification. Even if the number of "indeterminates" were to prove me wrong, the result still makes me reflect on modern Unionist claims to a distinctive sacrifice.

M A MARTIN
London SW19

Sir: In the Second World War, and little known or acknowledged, conscription did not apply to northern Ireland; they were volunteers and could, as one friend of mine did, get out of the services. The limited number of volunteers from northern Ireland was partly determined by the fear that southern Irish would take their jobs if they went to war.

Erskine Childers, whom I had the honour to meet in 1948, stated that southern Ireland would have joined the war but that the British were so hard pressed, particularly in 1940-41, that they could not guarantee air-naval cover for Ireland, which had very limited forces to protect itself.

PETER G HEWITT
Cambridge

one who refuses to accept the result of a ballot? ("Blow Tories as majority is reduced in by-election", 21 November) JENNIFER GREER
London SE11

Sir: Commuters at my local station were informed on Thursday morning that their train was

late because of a landslide on the line through Winchester. Move over, Mystic Meg? JENNY FOWLER
Woking, Surrey

Tele-tantrums

Sir: Those shoppers fraught by the rationing of Telceltubies ("Shoppers trapped to Laa-Laa-land", 21 November) are advised to practise "big bugs" rather than resort to "hand-bagging". STEVE GREENFIELD
Henford

Arts in the South

Sir: "The Mayflower is our first home outside London" says Derek Deane, Artistic Director of English National Ballet in your article "A sweet suite to suit all sorts" (20 November).

How appalling therefore, that Arts Council funding restrictions should cause the company to reduce their weeks at our theatre in 1998 from three to two. That means there will be no return of their brilliant new *Nadcracker* next year despite our selling every seat (over 10,000) a week ago.

The Birmingham Royal Ballet are also cutting back their touring because of insufficient funding and have chosen to lose their date with us. Consequently in 1998, the Mayflower – the only large scale theatre in the South – will be offering audiences only two weeks of ballet as opposed to the usual four.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the funding of London ballet and opera, the Arts Council of England have shown a total lack of regard or planning by causing such a blow to the South's arts.

DENNIS L J HALL
Director
The Mayflower Theatre
Southampton
Hampshire

What car crisis?

Sir: Professor G V R Borna's throwaway remark (Letters, 20 November) that "all environmentally aware people are trying to think of ways to counter the car crisis" perpetuates the myth that cars are the prime cause of problems with our environment.

In fact, if we are talking about greenhouse gases, motor transport only accounts for one-fifth of the 4.5 per cent of these gases that are man-made. And, if we are talking about air pollution, then only 5 per cent of the worrying PM10 emissions are caused by petrol engines (ie cars), with a further 19 per cent being due to diesel engines – including buses.

The lie that cars are the main cause of environmental damage is now repeated so often, and challenged so little, that it is becoming an accepted fact, when the reality is very different.

JAMES CADLE
High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire

Moderate barbarism

Sir: Ulrich Bartsch writes (Letters, 20 November) of the Muslim Brotherhood that it is a "home for moderate Islamic opposition in Egypt".

Is this the same "moderate opposition" which recently forced the courts and the Egyptian health ministry to authorise a reinstitution of the barbaric practice of female circumcision in public hospitals? [British Medical Journal, July 1997] F CHILES
London NW5

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Don't start. Don't even mention it. For those of you inclined to write sorrowful letters reminding me of the great days when *The Independent* never carried Royal stories, and shaking your heads over yesterday's front page about Blair and the Queen, and threatening to report me to Andreas Whitam Smith ... let me put the record straight. All we ever did was to refrain from publishing meaningless Royal stories at inordinate length. This one was not, I think, meaningless.

Far from it, Tony Blair's lavish verbal tributes to the Queen provoked various reactions: around this from pleased acknowledgement that the era of swearing was ending, to mimics of violent vomiting. But it was undeniably significant that New Labour, having moved so quickly into action after Diana's death, has decided to be so utterly monarchist.

Whatever you say about it, this is a thoroughly pro-establishment administration. It is the new establishment, but rarely has an incoming government been as comfortable with the old one.

There was also, in the Prime Minister's words, an intimate, filial note – the son's witty tribute to his mother. Does he hope to preside over a revival of monarchical popularity, doing for Elizabeth the Second what Disraeli did for Victoria? Stranger thoughts have gone through prime ministerial bones.

Mr Blair is a keen student of Labour and political history. He has read, I wonder, Ben Pimlott's book on the Queen, in which the young Harold Wilson is described in 1964 as "delighted by the Queen ... the ultimate symbol of his own success, linked to his identification with the man-in-the-street, along the lines, as one of his officials put it, of 'who would have thought of a chap like me ending up in a place like this'." Wilson, we read, did not patronise her but treated her almost as a member

of his own cabinet, using her as a sounding-board and declining to write press reports of their "extraordinary relationship". It is all uncannily similar this winter. I bet Blair has read Pimlott.

Anyway, it's bad news for republicans. My private hopes of seeing President Alan Bennett at the helm of the nation, or going to my final rest during the presidency of a leathery, gaunt and oracular Jarvis Cocker seem as far away as ever.

Neologism required. Position would suit pity, one or two-syllable and friendly apologetic. Acronyms considered. No time-wasters please. The vacancy is required to describe the "young Britain" people who have featured in this week's series, based on MORI research for the Industrial Society.

The interesting thing is that the caricature Young Briton is a person or type many of us instantly recognise as a true fit: liberal on issues like drugs, homosexuality and racism, but dutiful and conservative about relationships and marriage. They are serious, and certainly not socialist; consumerist rather than eco-idealistic. Saffy, the bespectacled daughter in *Absolutely Fabulous* is not so far away from parts of the composite caricature, but so too are millions of teenagers and twentysomethings.

Many older people (I'm in my late 30s but an early developer, thus vaguely post-Sixties) will agree that the portrait of the next generation has some truth in it – they are like us but not like us. As liberated, but (despite being younger) more grown-up. After a hard time from bad divorces or broken parental relationships, they want to get on in life and stick by their partners. So how do we describe them? Little Victorians? E-dicks (Earnest & Daffin Kids)? Stoned prunes? All suggestions welcome.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

The Blair Government is so pure that its rarefied atmosphere makes ordinary mortals' noses bleed – Lord Hattersley, Labour peer

The wonderful thing about being an independent is that you don't have to have policies – Martin Bell, Independent MP

It will be more pagan than Christmas, like the Yorkshire moors in the sunshine – Entertainer Julian Clary's view of heaven

Pornography is to eroticism what American fast food is to French gastronomy – Joseph Khalifa, founder of the Museum of Eroticism in Paris

From a distance the arts appear bathed in goodwill, flush with money for buildings from that new provider, the Lottery. Closer to, they are in crisis – accused of over-charging, over-spending and mismanagement – Sir Peter Hall, Arts pundit

It's much more interesting being sexy in your 40s. That Spice Girl thing is fine, but there is nothing more powerful and glamorous than a fully developed woman – Lesley Garrett, opera star

Check out that neighbourhood



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
HOUSE HUNTING

Juergen and Sharon Neuhoff wanted to move house, and who could blame them? Their neighbourhood in Albuquerque, New Mexico, suffered from several disadvantages, as far as the computer expert and his wife (both 43) were concerned. The beat in summer was intense and debilitating, poisonous scorpions would occasionally wander in from the Sierra (or the Mesa or whatever they have down there), and - from time to time - teenage gangs would shoot up the houses in the area, killing pensioners and children, if the mood so took them.

But where should one go to? When they had originally moved into their attractive bungalow, they were well aware of the Albuquerque International Balloon Festival, but failed to predict the murderous behaviour of some of their neighbours. It was an omission the Neuhoffs were determined not to repeat.

So they set to work on the Internet, cross-referencing crime statistics, educational facilities for their children and environmental considerations. Finally, when they had narrowed the choices down a bit, they sat down to watch their favoured new domicile on the Net, using a link to a camera set up by an Internet company in the town's main drag.

This was not a quiet hamlet in the American Lakes area, nor a Canadian backwater surrounded by the solemn majesty of Nature, nor yet the vibrant centre of one of Europe's safest cities, such as Siena or Venice. It was Colchester, in Essex. For nine months (a suitable gestation period) the Neuhoffs of New Mexico examined life, live, in Head Street. They saw (and, indeed, heard) the buses, the phone-boxes, the shoppers, the milkman, the postman and the pub. Old Mrs Evans was scrutinised as she pulled her trolley towards Superdrug; Trudy Tredwell was approved of as she parked the Range Rover with the labradors in the back, and dashed into the Royal Bank of Scotland for some weekend dosh; Fred Spurge caused no alarm as - whistling - he swept the flag-ends from the gutter.

But above all it was what the Neuhoffs did not see on their screen that brought them to

Essex. "There were no muggers threatening people," said Mr Neuhoff, "nor gangs walking the streets. And we hardly ever saw a policeman." Thus reassured that social undesirables were rare in Colchester - and knowing more about the place than it knew about itself - the Neuhoffs moved in last August.

Such thoroughness makes good sense. Despite the size of the investment that buying a house represents, and despite the emotional and spiritual importance of the decision on where to live, few of us do much more than appraising the central heating system and damp proof coursing of a building in an area which we (a) are generally attracted to, and (b) can afford.

Increasingly, however, our fellow house-hunters are wising up to the folly of this approach. Yes, the living room has a wonderful ceiling rose, and the architecture is splendid, but did you know that the man at number 47 bays at the moon when it is full? Or that the street doubles up as a dog toilet? Or that the teeny shrub just planted by your elderly neighbour along the garden fence is in fact *Cypripedium leydianum*, which will eventually grow to a height of over 50 feet?

For a few hundred pounds, I discovered this week, you can employ a man called John - an ex-policeman - to uncover such problems for you, before you sign that final contract. He or his partner, Len, will sit outside your dream house for several days and several nights in their G-reg Mondeo, observing everything while knocking back polystyrene cups full of strong, sweet tea. Between gulps John and Len will examine your putative neighbours for signs of psychosis, appraise passing kids for vandalistic tendencies, and report on the efficiency of the council's refuse collection. And if the local Neighbourhood Watch is working properly, presumably Len and John should expect to be harassed regularly by the police.

Frankly you'd be mad not to call them. But I wonder whether the principle shouldn't be extended by the prudent homeowner. I mean, we all know that the Neuhoffs have kept a good eye on us. But who in Colchester has checked out the Neuhoffs? All we really know about them is that they come from an inhospitable and violent place. Can we really be sure that they will not import bad American habits, such as shooting people in random acts of paranoid madness?

Actually I am sure that the Neuhoffs are kosher, but I am making a point here. Two months ago new people moved in across the street from us. The car was suspect, being old and having something like a pipe or a ladder permanently secured to its roof. But then again it was a VW Beetle. There was a dog - bad. But there were two small children. Which was good, because parents of small children rarely hold loud parties (or, indeed, any parties). Their voices were a bit raucous (bad), but their first act was to put up window boxes full of nice flowers (very, very good).

So each act has, over time, been added together to form a total picture of these new neighbours, and their balance sheet is clearly in credit. But how much time and worry would have been saved had we simply put private detectives on their trail the very first day the removals van appeared. Frankly, this kind of thing is too important to leave to chance.

A modest proposal for our Lords



TREVOR
PHILLIPS
THE TRIBES
OF BRITAIN

Esther Hernandez and Rosa Gonzalez work in a tiny insurance office in Amarillo, Texas, in a district where many customers speak Spanish. For the company's boss, and no doubt his customers, the presence of Spanish speakers is a considerable commercial advantage. So far so good. However, after some months, the two women were sacked for the same reason as they were hired. The firm's owner wanted them to speak to customers in the appropriate language, but wanted the conversations between staff to be in English; otherwise, said his wife, who also worked in the office, it was as though "they were whispering to each other behind our backs. It was very rude."

The women were told that they had to sign a contract to speak only English in the office; they refused, claiming that the boss was "telling us to deny who we are, forget our heritage". The state of Texas has in effect backed the firm's boss, by refusing the women unemployment benefits; the Texas Workforce Commission has concluded that they left the firm voluntarily by refusing to sign the demand to speak English to each other.

It is the sort of dispute that is terrifying America. This is not just about race; group rights of all sorts are being heavily disputed all over the United States, whether based on religion, geography, gender, language or any other marker of difference.

Our new instinct, on the other hand, is to offer more people more opportunities to be different. When a Tory toff like Alan Clark - who thinks that the way to deal with Irish terrorism is to unleash a wave of state terror - accepts that Gerry Adams should be allowed to flout the most fundamental act of national loyalty

(by taking his seat as an MP without swearing allegiance to the Queen) something odd is going on.

This week a conference of Americans and Brits, held, appropriately enough, in Scotland showed little meeting of minds on the issue of political identity. This was especially odd, given the nature of the group concerned. Each year since 1985, 40 or so young professionals from a variety of backgrounds gather in either the US or the UK to discuss some great topic of the day. Half are Americans, half Brits; the delegates each year are nominated by previous attendees.

The British-American Project, as it is called, is an exceptionally powerful network. On this side of the pond, it includes several leading politicians, including a cabinet minister, and several frontbenchers from other parties; trades unionists,

business leaders, a couple of national newspaper editors, artists, and the bosses of perhaps a dozen important pressure groups and quangos. There is a spread of regions, races and religious representation. On the American side, the same is true, with the additional factor that they are richer and more important, as is true in most things. In theory, the discussions should be free of national bias.

Yet we do see these things very differently. For the Americans, political identity has come to be code for race, language and creed. Their great fear is that what they regard as a people united under one flag, and one constitution, could fall apart under the assault of disparate groups of people all claiming to be Americans. We, on the other hand, seem determined to break down the idea that there is any one sin-

gle way of being British, and are striving to reassert the standing of the many tribes that make up the British nation. They fear disintegration; we seek disaggregation. They worry about their diversity; we trumpet ours.

All of this is, of course, partly a reaction to history. The Brits have a thousand or more years of nation-building behind them and, historically speaking, we have had ripples rather than waves of immigration; change has been incremental. Americans, on the other hand, have had to construct an idea of their nation from huge groups of people who had barely heard of each other before landing on American soil. Inevitably, the way they chose to do so was to establish tests of citizenship and loyalty which could be written down.

According to Gunnar Myrdal, the American Creed rests on a

The members of the House of Lords file in to Parliament to represent themselves. But new peers could give us all a voice

set of universal principles and ideas - liberty, equality, democracy, constitutionalism, liberalism, limited government and private enterprise. To be American does not mean being born or living there; it means living its values. According to Harvard's Samuel Huntington, "It has been [America's] fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one."

This appeals to me. I dislike the idea that identity is so intimately tied up with a piece of land and water that those who do not live there now but might have done so in the past are excluded from the tribe. As rehearsed in these pages before, the basis of my concern about Scottish devolution is that it promises *Braveheart* but will actually deliver *The Brittas Empire*.

As ever, we Brits are in a rare old muddle, not sure whether we are British, European, or perhaps just a collection of thousand-year-old tribes. Or are we all those things? And if so do our political institutions reflect the fact in any way? The answers are, of course, yes we are, and no, they don't.

Our political system is ludicrously one-dimensional. Currently, for most of us, the only aspect of our identity that is represented at Westminster is defined purely by geography. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, black or white, Christian, Jew or Muslim, the only person who can speak for you within the system is someone whose constituency is defined by lines on a map. That is, unless you happen to be a Church of England Bishop, or an hereditary peer, in which case you can represent yourself in Parliament.

But we can do better. The new government is probably thinking hard about its plans for a new second chamber to replace the House of Lords. Should we not say now that the job of the second chamber is precisely to do what geography cannot - to ensure that our political system gives voice to the many other identities and tribes that make up the British people, and who cannot, by definition, find a place in the House of Commons?

Is Jean-Jacques Rousseau to blame for France's missing millions?



JOHN
LICHFIELD
FAMILLE
NOMBREUSE

Here is a game of consequences.

France was the first country in the world widely to practise birth control, starting in the second half of the 18th century.

As a consequence, at least 60 million French people have gone missing and I can travel for half price on the Paris Metro.

Come again?

France, a fertile and temperate place, has the lowest population density of any large industrialised country in western Europe (save Spain which is not so fertile or industrialised). If France was populated as thickly as Britain - and there is no reason why it should not be - there would be 120 million French people instead of almost 60 million. If it was as crowded as England, it would have a population approaching 180 million. France would be overwhelmingly the dominant country in Europe; it would rival the United States as a power on the planet.

To its chagrin, it isn't (populous) and it doesn't (domi-

nate). France is a remarkably empty place.

As a consequence, it has an obsessive policy of encouraging large families. For more than 100 years - and intensively in the last 50 years - creating babies has been a preoccupation of successive governments in Paris.

To be the father or mother of three children or more in France is to be a privileged person: an official hero of the state; the parent of a *"famille nombreuse"* (numerous family).

We had two children when we moved to France a year ago; we acquired our third child, Grace, a month ago. We have thus become, overnight, a *famille nombreuse*. As a consequence, we qualify for all kinds of goodies.

I can now travel for half price on the Paris Metro (23 pence for any journey within the city). The privilege, entirely funded by the state, applies even when I am travelling alone. I can get 30 per cent off second-class rail fares and internal air travel. I pay substantially less tax and qualify for increased family allowances (although these are under threat). Once I have lived in Paris a little longer, I will qualify for a Paris-Famille card: this will give me £200 a year towards metro travel, car tax, school meals or child care. It will also give us free admission to museums, swimming pools and playgrounds.

I am, of course happy to claim the benefits, *grâce à* baby Grace, but they also made me curious.

Does any of this largesse do any good? Does it really encourage French people to have babies? Why is France so empty in the first place?



The more the merrier: our correspondent travels half price in Paris

The low population density, by European standards, is sometimes attributed to the slaughter of young French males during the First World War. But Laurent Toulman, a demographic expert at the French statistic institute, explained that the phenomenon is, in fact, much older. Every other European country had a population explosion in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Advances in medicine and diet stopped people dying young but, for several decades, the birth rate remained as high as ever: as a consequence, the European population leaped.

But not in France. French people also stopped dying young (if they avoided the guillotine) but they also stopped having so many children. Long before other countries, the French began to practise birth control, mostly though coitus in-

terruptus, according to Mr Toulman, since condoms were not yet widely available. Why they did this remains a mystery: some historians put forward economic explanations; others suggest that it was something to do with Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the cult of the child. Families, even poor families, wanted to cherish a small number of children rather than neglect them in large numbers.

For whatever reason, the French birth-rate collapsed long before it did elsewhere. France, which had for centuries been the most populous, and one of the most thickly populated, European countries, saw other nations catch up and even go ahead. At the beginning of the 19th century, there were 27,600,000 people in France and about 10,500,000 in Britain. Both countries now have about

58,000,000. In other words, if France had grown as fast as Britain it would have a population of 150,000,000 today.

By the middle of the 19th century, the French were worried by their shortage of children; there was a *"preoccupation du déshérent"*, an obsession with emptiness, according to another French demographic expert, Quang-che Dinh. This was reinforced by the slaughter in the trenches in the First World War; but, in fact, those losses were more than made up by Spanish and Italian immigration in the 1920s and 1930s.

The defeat in 1940 - when Germany mobilised 40 divisions to France's 10 - led to something like *"demographic panic"*, according to Mr Quang.

The Vichy government enormously increased subsidies to families, partly for ide-

ological reasons. But the policy was pursued vigorously post-war. The definition of a *famille nombreuse* was reduced to three children, and the benefits increased, as recently as 1982.

Mr Quang has studied the effects of family subsidies on French fertility rates and population growth: his conclusion, backed by other studies, is that they have no discernible impact. The French fertility rate - now 1.72 children for every woman of child-bearing age - is marginally above the European average, but little different from the rate in Britain.

Last month the new Socialist-led government in France did something brave and sensible, without quite admitting it. It broke with more than a century of procreation policy in France by imposing a means test on family allowances. In other words, it abandoned the principle that the state should reward its citizens for having large families, however wealthy the citizens might be. Similar restrictions on the other perks of multiple parenthood can only be a matter of time.

The truth is that France missed the demographic bus 200 years ago. It could now replace the missing legions of French people only by immigration on a vast scale (any takers, Mr Le Pen?).

My wife and I have done our best to fill the gap: Grace can become a French citizen, if she wishes, when she is 13 (she is already Irish and British). Three children, we agree, is quite enough. However, if we were to have a fourth child, we would get 40 per cent off rail travel; a fifth child would give us 50 per cent off ...

An Erotic Review



The Erotic Print Society REVIEW is now available quarterly to readers for the first time. (As revealed in last Monday's *Independent*.) The writers are well known. The features are provocative. The illustrations are explicit. Only the price is modest: £10.00 for a subscription to four issues plus the Society's gem-like, 80-page illustrated catalogue of erotic prints.

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Air Commandant Dame Jean Conan Doyle

Lena Annette Jean Conan Doyle, air force officer: born Crowborough, Sussex 21 December 1912; OBE 1948, DBE 1963; AE 1949; Deputy Director, Women's Royal Air Force 1952-54, 1960-62, Director 1963-66; Inspector of the Women's Royal Air Force 1954-56; OC, RAF Hawkinge 1956-59; Honorary ADC to the Queen 1963-66; married 1945 Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Bromet (died 1983); died London 18 November 1997.

The last direct link with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, has been severed with the death of his younger daughter, Jean Conan Doyle.

She was born in 1912 and spent her youth in Crowborough, Sussex, and in the New Forest. Her character was fixed from an early age. "Something very strong and forceful seems to be at the back of that wee body. Her will is tremendous," her father wrote of her when she was five.

"As a rule she sits quiet, aloof, affable, keenly alive to all that passes and yet taking no part in it save for some subtle smile or glance. And then suddenly the wonderful grey-blue eyes under the long black lashes will gleam like coy diamonds, and such a hearty little chuckle will come from her that everyone else is bound to laugh out of sympathy."

The ringing laugh, the

smiling eyes, the good nature, charm, and humour were essential elements of her character, but it was tempered by a strong and narrow moral code and in later years by a steady determination to protect the reputation of her father from real and imagined slights.

Jean, or "Billy" as she was known when young, was educated at Granville House, Eastbourne, and her first 17 years were happy ones (despite trouble with her eyesight). She accompanied her father on his spiritualist tours to Australia (1920-21) America (1922, 1923) and South Africa (1928-29), and was devoted to him.

After his death in 1930 she remained at home with her mother until 1938 when she joined the Auxiliary Service of the RAF. Two years later she was commissioned into the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (the predecessor of the Women's Royal Air Force), and saw wartime service at Hawkinge, at HQ Fighter Command, HQ No 9 Group at Preston and in Northern Ireland.

After the war she served in Germany with the British Air Forces of Occupation (for which she was appointed OBE), and then moved to the Technical Training Command. She served as Commanding Officer of RAF Hawkinge from 1956 to 1959, and on 1 April 1963 became the head of the Women's Royal Air Force (the

first Director to have risen through the ranks). She was created DBE in 1963 and was an Honorary ADC to the Queen from 1963 until her retirement in 1966.

"Tidiness" and "Order" were her catchwords and she was known for her hard work and commitment to the job in hand. For many years this stood in the way of close emotional attachments, but in 1965 she married Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Bromet, who was 20 years her senior, and they had a happy life together until his death in 1983.

The running of her father's literary estate was left to her brothers, who handled it badly. Denis, the eldest, who married "Princess" Nina Mdivani and spent the war years in America, ran up large debts and was close to bankruptcy by the time of his death in 1955 - with litigation pending over unpaid American tax.

Adrian, who was dismissed from the Royal Navy for insubordination and who thereafter devoted all his energy to the memory of his father, caused Jean great personal hurt in 1969, a year before his death, when a newspaper revealed that he was planning to sell the archives of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Foundation in Switzerland.

Throughout this period there was continuing and often acrimonious litigation within the family over the copyright of

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's works and over the ownership and rights to his papers. This continued after the expiry of the copyright in 1980 and was only resolved in 1996.

Jean Bromet (as she remained to her friends after her husband's death) had a close involvement with two Service charities, the Royal Star and Garter Home (of which she was a governor for 14 years, until 1982), and the "Not Forgotten Association" (for which she served as a committee member from 1975 and as President from 1981 to 1991), but it was as her father's daughter that she was most widely known during her later years and in this capacity she reverted to being Dame Jean Conan Doyle.

An attempt to authorise (and on occasion to ban) pastiches of the Sherlock Holmes stories in America was partly successful despite the uncertainties over her copyright claims, and a great deal of her time was devoted to answering inquiries and writing about her father.

A simple gravestone in Minstead churchyard in the New Forest, near the cross which marks the site where her mother and father have lain since their re-interment in 1953, already bears her name with that of her husband. She had no children and the Conan Doyle line dies with her.

— Richard Lancelyn Green



'Her will is tremendous': the infant Jean (or 'Billy') with her father, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Bob Jones

Bob Jones, university administrator and preacher: born 19 October 1911; Acting President, Bob Jones University 1932-47, President 1947-71, Chancellor/Chairman 1971-77; died Greenville, South Carolina, 12 November 1997.

In his youth, the story goes, Bob Jones Jr was offered a Hollywood contract. But he declined, convinced God would not be best pleased. Instead he went into the family business - the eponymous Christian university founded by his father in 1927, to save the children of Bible belt fundamentalists from the temptations and corruption of secular education.

Jones - "Dr Bob" as he was later known - ran the university for four decades, before moving in 1971 to the largely ceremonial post of Chancellor and devoting much of his energy to preaching. In this sophisticated and "enlightened" late 20th century, the institution is all too easy to mock. Its campus at Greenville, South Carolina, where tobacco, alcohol, and television - not to mention interracial dating and unseemly displays of affection between the sexes - are banned, is Fifties America in aspic: a demure vista of girls in long skirts and bobby socks, boys with cropped hair, immaculate lawns and borders, where all is perfect and nothing quite real.

In Britain, Bob Jones University is best known for putting the Dr into Dr Ian Paisley, in 1966, when the Ulster Unionist politician was in jail for civil disobedience. "Wouldn't you have given Paul a degree when he was in prison?" he argued to his somewhat apprehensive board. Later Jones and Paisley formed the World Congress of Fundamentalists and Jones died four days before he was due in Belfast for the opening of Paisley's new church.

For Americans, however, Jones is famous for having refused to end his university's ban on interracial dating, after the Internal Revenue Service removed its tax-exempt status in 1970, on the grounds that it practised discrimination. Jones the Creationist yielded no ground. Literally interpreted, he insisted, the Bible banned relations between couples of different races.

But the ruling had small impact on the fortunes of the university, now headed by his eldest son, Bob Jones III. The largest fundamentalist college in the United States, it draws its 5,000 students from all over the country, offering them a choice of some 100 courses. Every discipline has a strongly Christian slant, but graduates have gone on to Harvard, Yale, and the like, highly prized by future employers for their diligence and sobriety.

— Rupert Cornwell

— Jack Adrian

BANKING ON DEATH

We particularly like this whodunit for three reasons:

1.

The banking and business background is delightfully authentic and "new"

2.

The writing is greatly superior to what we're used to in a thriller

3.

The characterisation is exceptional

EMMA LATHEN

Dustjacket for one of the Latsis/Henissart ('Lathen') collaborations

Mary Jane Latsis

Mary Jane Latsis, writer: born Chicago, Illinois 1927; died Plymouth, New Hampshire 3 November 1997.

Mary Jane Latsis had a split personality in more ways than one. With her partner in (fictional) crime, Martha Henissart, she was doubly pseudonymous, the two of them writing superior detective novels under the name "Emma Lathen" and also under "R.B. Dominic".

To crime fiction, the collaborative cloak is not particularly unusual, and, for a variety of reasons, can more often than not be highly effective, each partner supplying, usually refreshingly, some essential - though sometimes quite minor - ingredient the other lacks.

"Ellery Queen" and "Barnaby Rook" were the cousins Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee; "Francis Beeding", "John Somers" and "David Pilgrim" were J.L. Palmer and Hilary

St George Saunder; "Q. Patrick", "Patrick Quentin" and "Jonathan Stages" were Hugh Wheeler and Richard Webb.

However, Latsis and Henissart, in both mood and outlook, and general charm, inhabited an essential cosy corner of the criminal universe, and were perhaps far closer to the two British chroniclers of the spy Tommy Hambledon, "Manning Cotes" (Adelaide Manning and Cyril Cotes).

Latsis was born in Chicago in 1927, grew up in Forest Park, and was educated at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, where she majored in economics and first met Henissart. She later gained a Public Administration degree at Harvard, had some involvement with the Central Intelligence Agency, then worked as an economist (her day-job, as it were) for the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation in Rome.

She returned to the US to teach at Wellesley, and met up

again with Martha Henissart. Almost at once they began a collaboration which lasted virtually 40 years.

It was an entirely fruitful and enjoyable one. Both having had hard experience of the world of corporate finance, as well as the corridors of power in both Wall Street and Washington, they chose as their "detective" a corporate banker of mature years (to give him gravitas and experience). He was certainly getting on a bit in 1961, when their first novel, *Banking On Death*, was issued in the United States (a year later in the UK), and was thus positively Methuselah-esque in the 1990s.

The Thatcher series is a triumph of witty characterisation and intelligent plotting. Characters occur and re-occur throughout the years in delightful procession (especially Thatcher's chief, the bank's feckless, at times idiotic, and often vacationing, President Brad Withers).

There is sharp irony: most

of the books make some social point, or attack some absurdity in the system. And there is much pleasure for the reader in being confronted by, in book after book, a world - that of high finance - that becomes less and less baffling, thanks to the authors' skilful explanations. Pleasure, too, in exploring what seems, at first sight, to be the utterly alien milieu in which, nonetheless, financial shenanigans can occur: *Sweet And Low* (1974, the cocoa exchange); *Ashes To Ashes* (1971, the funeral business); and *Green Grow the Dollars* (1982, the commercial and murderous possibilities in big-cropping tomatoes). All of these, and other, strange worlds are gulped down by the reader, carried along by the swift pace of the narrative and the sharply drawn and involving characters.

Their collaborative method was unusual, since they wrote simultaneously, Latsis working on Chapter Five, say, in

unghand no yellow paper, while Henissart pounded away at Chapter Six, two-fingered, on an old Hermes 3,000 portable typewriter, both following a rough outline, then smoothing out all the plot-knots and inconsistencies at the end of the book.

Latsis and Henissart delivered an "Emma Lathen" roughly every 18 months. By the late 1960s other plots and other characters were beating at their creative door, and they transformed themselves again into "R.B. Dominic", whose crime-solver was the Democrat Congressman Beo Safford, from Ohio, his adventures set mainly against a Washington backdrop.

Although "Emma Lathen" slowed down during the 1980s ("Dominic" discontinuing the Safford series), a final urbane and civilised John Putnam Thatcher entertainment was finished by Latsis and Henissart before the former's death, and is due for imminent publication.

— Jack Adrian

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

HARVEY: John Hooper, FSA FRSL FSG, whilst reading P.G. Wodehouse, 18 November 1997. Simple funeral at Haycombe Crematorium, Whiteway, Bath, Friday 28 November at 12.30pm. Family flowers only. No mourning by request. Donations may be sent to the Tradesmen Trust, c/o W. Adkins & Sons, 170 Locks Hill, Frome BA11 1UH. Telephone: 01733 452100.

MALINI: Irem, died peacefully on 18 November 1997 aged 57 years. Wonderful wife to Stuart and mother to Jane and Rachel. Funeral at St Margaret's Church, Lee Terrace on Friday 28 November at 2.30pm.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding announcements, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5LQ, or by fax to 0171-293 1010, or e-mail to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £4.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (Deaths, Funerals, Forfeiting marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

TODAY: The Duke of York visits Montserrat in the Leeward Islands. The Princess Royal, 12, visits the Scottish Royal Ulster, attends the Scotland v Australia International Match at Murrayfield, Edinburgh. TOMORROW: The Duke of York visits Montserrat in the Leeward Islands. The Princess Royal, 12, visits the Scottish Royal Ulster, attends the Scotland v Australia International Match at Murrayfield, Edinburgh. The Queen's Service in the Falkland Islands. The Queen's Service in the Falkland Islands. The Queen's Service in the Falkland Islands.

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: The Right Rev Michael Adie, former Bishop of Guildford, 68; The Rev Lord Beaumont of Whitely, priest and writer, 69; Mr Boris Becker, tennis champion, 30; Mr John Bird, actor, 61; Mr Jon Cleary, novelist, 80; Mr Tom Conti, actor and director, 55; Mr Brim Dance, former Headmaster, St Dunstan's College, Cardiff, 68; Brigadier Hilary Dixon-Nuttall, former Matron-in-Chief and Director, Army Nursing Services, 58; Mr Terry Gilliam, animator, writer and director, 57; Sir Peter Hall, director of plays, films and operas, 67; Sir Andrew Huxley, former Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, 80; Mrs Billie Jean King, tennis champion, 54; Professor Sir John Kell, geologist, 63; Mr Wayne Larkins, cricketer, 44; Mr Peter McMaster, former Director General, the Ordnance Survey, 66; Mr John Newman, trades unionist, 66; Sir John Owen, High Court judge, 72; Mr Robin Reeve, former Head Master, King's College School, Wimbledon, 63; Mr Gunther Schuller, composer, 72; Mr Robert Vaughn, actor, 65; Sir Michael Walker, former diplomat, 81; Mr Nicolas Walter, Manager, Rationalist Press Association, 63.

TOMORROW: Professor Colin Adamson-Macdonald, engineering and higher education consultant, 75; Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Biggs, former Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Fleet, 59; Mr Jerry Bock, composer, 69; Mrs Anne Burns, former gliding champion, 82; Mr Robin Cole, former BBC television political editor, 70; Mr John Coulting, former chairman, London Philharmonic Orchestra, 71; Mr Michael Gough, actor, 80; Mr Shane Gould, swimmer, 42; Sir John Hermon, former Chief Constable, RUC, 69; Sir Michael Knight, chairman, Cobham plc, 65; Sir David Lees, chairman, GKN and Courtalds, 61; Mr Christopher Logan, writer, 71; Mr Alan Mulhery, footballer, 56; Mr Julian Oxley, Director-General, the

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, 59; Mr Krzysztof Penderecki, composer, 64; Mr Anton Poot, former chairman and managing director, Philips, 68; Lord Prosser, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 63; Miss Diana Quick, actress, 51; Sir Peter Saunders, theatrical producer, 86; Sir Peter Savroon, philosopher, 78; Professor John Tarn, former Vice-Chancellor, Liverpool University, 63; Mr Nigel Tranter, novelist and historian, 88; Lt-Col George West, an Extra Equerry to the Queen, 60.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: George Elliot (Mary Ann Evans), novelist, 1819; General Charles-André Marie-Joseph de Gaulle, French president, 1890. Deaths: Clio Staples Lewis, writer, 1963; Aldous Leonard Huxley, writer, 1963; John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th US President, assassinated 1963; Anthony Burgess (John Anthony Burgess Wilson), writer, 1993. On this day: Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, 1497; Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister, 1990. Today is the Feast Day of St Cecilia or Cecily and Saints Philomena and Apphia.

TOMORROW: Births: William H. Bonney (Billy the Kid), outlaw, 1859; Boris Karloff (William Henry Pratt) actor, 1887. Deaths: Richard Hakluyt, geographer, 1616; Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen, murderer, executed 1910. On this day: The first pillar box was erected (at St Helier, Jersey), 1852; Dr Who was first shown by the BBC, 1963. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Alexander Nevsky, prince, St Amphilocheus, St Clement I, pope, St Columbanus, St Felicitas, St Gregory of Girgenti and St Trudo or Trond.

Lectures

TODAY: National Portrait Gallery: Jill Noll-Bower, "Katharine Mansfield: her story and stories", 3pm.

FAITH & REASON

A dragon the Pope has not slain

The Roman Catholic bishops of North and South America this week gathered in Rome for an unprecedented pan-American synod. Some Vatican commentators have pronounced it the "death knell for liberation theology". In Linden is not so sure.

Liberation theology's obituary has already been written by its enemies. "The fall of the European governmental systems based on Marxism turned out to be a kind of twilight of the gods for that theology," the Vatican's doctrinal watchdog, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has declared. And the subject barely featured in dispatches from the Pope's recent visit to Brazil.

During the 1970s and 1980s it was international news. The Committee of Santa Fé, a policy group close to President Reagan, advised in 1980: "US policy must begin to counter (not react against) liberation theology as it is utilised in Latin America by the 'liberation theology' clergy." When the Catholic head of the CIA, William Casey, met with Pope John Paul II to talk about Poland, the Latin American church was on the agenda.

In the Cold War context, and in the aftermath of Fidel Castro's guerrilla suc-

cess in Cuba, the opponents of liberation theology conducted a propaganda campaign to project it as the bastard offspring of Christianity and Marxism, as Communist infiltration of the Church. So the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the electoral defeat of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, were together proclaimed as the last nail in liberation theology's coffin.

This at least is the Vatican's authorised version of history. The dragon is slain. The new dragon is religious terrorism, the idea that the world's religions represent different ways to God, and it does not matter much which one you choose.

What really happened is somewhat more complicated. Liberation theology grew out of the faith, struggles, sufferings and hopes of the poor. The Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, one of its founding fathers, took as his starting point the profoundly practical missionary question: "How is it possible to tell the poor, who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial of love, that God loves them?"

The Christian Gospel had to be about changing the world of the poor socially, economically and politically.

The crucible in which this theology was forged was the basic Christian communities; rarely more than 2 per cent of mass-going Catholics were involved in them in Latin American countries, but

they were seen as inordinately threatening. They were no revolutionary cells, rather reflection on the scriptures in the light of experience was their mainstay.

By 1986 the Pope was acknowledging to the Brazilian bishops that liberation theology was "correct and necessary", but it "must constitute a new stage - intimately connected with those that have gone before". Yet he made sure none of its advocates were consecrated as bishops. The radical Christian commitment expressed in a theology of liberation had meanwhile become universally known as the "option for the poor". Its spirituality and way of doing theology recognising its specific context had entered the bloodstream of the churches and had spread far beyond Latin America.

Between 1990 and 1992, 710 new churches sprung up in Sao Paulo, Brazil, one of the biggest urban conglomerations in the world; 91 per cent of them were Pentecostal. Pentecostalism, the product of a great missionary wave of evangelical religion from California, is more plausibly presented as liberation theology's oesmesis. With its championing of individual advancement, the virtues of sobriety, cleanliness, punctuality and loyalty, alongside cathartic forms of worship, it offers to insert Christians smoothly into the neo-liberal economy and arm them spiritually for the brutally competitive urban world.

It is not so much the basic Christian communities who have proved vulnerable to this assault but Catholicism as a whole. Neither liberation theologians nor conservative Catholics now have much idea how to hold on to their congregations, other than by embracing the Pentecostal style of worship. The combination of immediate spiritual and emotional satisfaction and the longer-term promise of the glittering prizes of advanced capitalism are irresistible. The cargo stamped "Jesus Export USA" is the cult of the future.

Or is it? One school of thought sees Pentecostalism in Latin America as halfway house to secularism. First-generation rural Catholic, second-generation urban Pentecostal, third-generation secular Yuppie.

Catholicism, as it has always done with its radicals who formed Religious Orders, has absorbed liberation theology, not without pain, and has been significantly influenced by it. But has the Vatican put its considerable weight behind the basic Christian communities and supported the liberation theologians, rather than working to neutralise them, Pentecostalism might not have had such an easy ride. Like political parties, divided Churches cannot expect to retain their members.

"Liberation Theology: Coming of Age" is published by CTR, 190a New North Road, London N1 7BL, price £2.50.

27/SHARES

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997

Bob Jones

Carlton in the spotlight as media companies move ahead

MARKET REPORT



CATHY NEWMAN

It has not been a good year for the media sector, and while at certain points Carlton Communications has managed to outperform its peers, it has failed to keep pace with the FTSE All Share index.

So it was hardly surprising yesterday that, at long last, market-makers began to think the stock was looking cheap. Merrill Lynch was one broker making positive noises, and suggesting it was at least 15 per cent undervalued when it was languishing around the 450p mark. Carlton closed up 20p at 476p, and more than 4.23 million shares changed hands.

There may be another reason for Carlton's renaissance. Analysts are suggesting that the company may be prepared to announce a share buyback when it unveils results shortly.

As one City watcher pointed out yesterday, announcing such

a move is bound to hit bulls, as even if it was abandoned at a later stage, in the short-term it would do wonders for Carlton's share price.

Another observer was less receptive to the idea, saying that there were far more creative uses of cash, especially with the onset of digital television next year. Carlton owns half of British Digital Broadcasting, which won the licences to broadcast digital terrestrial television earlier this year. Granada Group owns the other half.

Granada has for a long time been lukewarm on the prospects for BDB, but at Thursday's results presentation the media and leisure group was remarkably bullish. That may have helped Carlton along the way yesterday.

Carlton was not the only Footsie media company to move up yesterday. United

News & Media closed up 21p at 755p; BSkyB jumped 14p to 425p; Pearson nipped up 24p to 830p; and EMI leapt 11p to 505p.

Analysts suggested that, as the year draws to a close, fund managers are reassessing the sector, and may be switching out of over-performers like banks, and into underperformers like media.

Financials were nevertheless in the money yesterday. Stocks with Far Eastern influences saw a fair share of activity after the Nikkei's gains on Thursday night. HSBC responded to Hong Kong's 5 per cent surge overnight and added 6p to close at £15.67.

Meanwhile Standard Chartered, one of the best Footsie performers, ended 36p better off at 726p, encouraged by add advice from SBC Warburg.

Things were not looking so rosy for Allied Colloids, the speciality chemicals group which on Thursday confirmed market rumours that it had had a bid approach. However, Allied issued a statement just minutes before close of trading last night saying the talks had been terminated and the matter was now closed. The company topped the Footsie 250 fallers, down 13.5p at 817.5p.

Utility stocks were feeling flush, ahead of a stream of results next week. Thames Water jumped 40p to 935p; Wessex Water added 17.5p to 507p; Yorkshire Water surged 14.5p to 484.5p, and United Utilities ticked up 24p to 765p.

Analysts pointed out that defensive, non-overseas stocks such as utilities continued to be attractive as long as the pound remained strong.

Celt Telecom - in the dot-

expecting the shares to fall again when trading resumes on Monday.

RJB was another second-line casualty, after reported warnings from the Department of Trade and Industry that there would be cutbacks in the coal industry. It dropped 7.5p to 150p. Stagecoach could not get into gear either, after a Kleinwort Benson sell note. It closed down 23.5p at 817.5p.

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Celt Telecom - in the dot-

drums on Thursday after Iovica's fall from favour - rallied after announcing plans to raise £58.3m through a share offer at 585p. The group ended up 13.5p at 598.5p.

Glaxo Wellcome improved by 39p to £13.56 on the back of positive noises from brokers, in particular Goldman Sachs. Glaxo said yesterday that the EU had moved to approve Combivir, its anti-HIV drug.

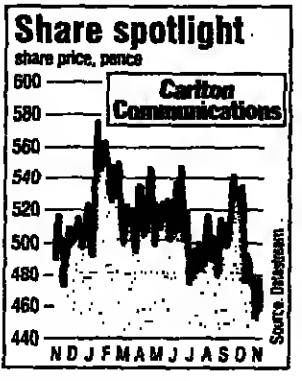
Ladbroke was another wanted stock, up 4p to 293p after presentations to analysts and institutions this week on its hotel business.

Footsie was not only supported by the Asian markets overnight on Thursday, but also by a strong opening yesterday afternoon on Wall Street. The index appears to be heading for the 5,000 mark again. It closed up 77.4 points at a day-high of 4,985.8.

TAKING STOCK

Calsonborough Group, the Office-quoted company which owns office suites, suspended dealings in its shares pending a cash-raising announcement next week. The company will use proceeds from a rights issue to fund a new business centre. Its shares were suspended at 18p. The company reported a pre-tax loss in the year to the end of March of £81,978.

Ashted Group, the plant and machinery hire company, shed 1.5p to close at 175p after the Railways Pension Funds sold 7.5 million shares. Ashted has recently been outperforming the sector by 40 per cent, so the pension fund may have decided it was time to take profits. In August, Ashted bought Sheriff Holdings, one of its rivals, for £39.4m, adding 51 outlets to Ashted's 153 depot network.



Stock	High	Low	Open	Close	Change	Volume
Alcoholic Beverages	100.00	98.00	99.00	98.50	-0.50	100,000
Asda	100.00	98.00	99.00	98.50	-0.50	100,000
Asda PLC	100.00	98.00	99.00	98.50	-0.50	100,000
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Redland in £800m tiles sale to repel hostile bidder

Redland is expected to announce next week the sale of its majority stake in RBB, the European roof tiles business, to the subsidiary's German family shareholders for around £800m. Andrew Yates reports on the building group's desperate attempt to stave off a £1.7bn hostile bid from Lafarge, the French construction giant.

Redland is believed to be close to concluding a deal which will see it sell its 56.5 per cent in RBB to the Braas family, who already own the minority shareholding in the business. It hopes to raise at least £800m from the deal. Redland will then return most of the proceeds to shareholders.

The deal could be announced before next Wednesday, the day by which Redland has to publish its final defence document aimed at persuading shareholders to repel Lafarge's unwanted bid.

St Gobain, the French building group which has been advised by the NM Rothschild merchant bank, is understood to have been interested in acquiring RBB. However, after weeks of intense negotiations, Redland is understood to have chosen to side with the German family shareholders.

The move could pave the way for a complete break up of the troubled British building materials group. Redland is already in talks with rivals about selling off some or all of its US and European aggregates businesses. Although these talks are at an early stage, Redland is thought to be confident that it can achieve more disposals.

Lafarge has made a 320p share cash offer for Redland, which values the company at nearly £1.7bn. Redland intends to try and convince investors in its defence document that the proceeds from the sale of RBB, together with the value of the remaining business are worth more than the 320p per share on offer.

However, Redland's move is unlikely to signal the end of the bid battle. Some

analysts estimate that the RBB stake is worth more than £1bn. Lafarge is likely to argue that Redland has sold the business cheaply to get a quick sale in order to scotch the French group's takeover. Some of the disposal proceeds will also be eaten up by the capital gains tax Redland will be forced to pay on completion of the sale.

City observers believe that Lafarge will mount a concerted campaign to convince Redland's shareholders to accept a cash-in-hand offer rather than wait to receive the proceeds of the disposal programme. It will be forced to raise its offer, however, if it cannot muster enough support to block the sale of the RBB stake. Lafarge has until 3 December to make a higher offer. Shareholders must decide on the takeover by 17 December.

Redland has been forced to break itself in the absence of a "white knight" coming to its rescue and launching an agreed bid. One building analyst said: "Redland needed to pull something out of the hat. After a dreadful performance, the Lafarge bid put them up against it. The management simply could not have got away with promising jam tomorrow any more."

Redland's decision to sell RBB throws the future of Robert Napier, the group's embattled chief executive, into doubt. He is understood to have been instrumental in negotiating a deal with Helga Bruhn-Braas, the Braas family representative who resigned from Redland's board to concentrate on making a bid for the roof tile business.

However, Mr Napier has presided over Redland's share price collapse over the last few years and sources suggest he may have to step down.

Redland has been dogged by poor European construction markets, particularly the alarming slump in the German building industry which had enjoyed years of rapid expansion. It has also suffered from the legacy of paying way over the odds for the £1bn acquisition of Steelley, the Midland brickmaker.

Profit warning followed profit warning and, before the Lafarge approach, the shares fell to a low of 220p, compared to a price of 634p in 1994.



Bike group's float runs into trouble

The flotation of Triaktis, the group backed by the athlete Carl Lewis (left) that has developed a revolutionary new mountain bike, has suffered a puncture. Plans to float on the Alternative Investment Market were launched by Mr Lewis, winner of nine Olympic gold medals, in a flurry of publicity in August. Then the group said it planned to float within a month. Almost two months later it has still failed to come to the market.

David Lewis, of the Lemley Lewis public relations firm which handled the float announcement, said yesterday he had only been employed on an ad hoc basis and had not heard from Triaktis since the launch. "I have no idea when they plan to float. You know as much as me."

Ray Harris, Triaktis's finance director, acknowledged there had been a "few hiccups". He said: "Things are still proceeding but we are behind schedule. There is nothing wrong with the business. We have just had some technical difficulties. There may be some more new developments in the next few weeks." He declined to put a new timetable on the flotation.

The group had hoped to raise £25m by issuing new shares, valuing the company at £50m. Cheviot Capital is organising the share placing.

— Andrew Yates
Photograph: Adrian Dennis

Beckett to issue January verdict on US bid for Eastern

Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, is not expected to deliver her ruling on the bid by PacificCorp of the US for Eastern, Britain's biggest regional electricity company, until next January at the earliest.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission last night sent its report on PacificCorp's £3.7bn bid for Eastern's parent company, Energy Group, to Mrs Beckett. She is expected to take at least four to six weeks to study the report before deciding whether to allow the bid through and, if so, on what conditions.

The bid was referred to the MMC in August by Mrs Beckett because of her con-

cerns over whether it would be possible to maintain adequate regulatory control over Energy Group once it was in the hands of a large overseas utility.

Her ruling will have important repercussions for the electricity industry as a whole since seven other regional electricity companies are already under US ownership. It will also give a clue as to the Government's attitude towards vertical integration in the electricity industry. As well as being the country's largest electricity supplier with 3 million customers, Eastern is Britain's fourth biggest electricity generator with 10 per cent of the market.

PacificCorp has argued that the deal

should be waved through without restrictions because it raises no competition issues.

However, there is known to have been some concern about the funding of the bid and the ability of the regulator, Oftec, to ensure that the UK electricity business is properly ring-fenced. The combined business would have debts of some \$12bn (£7bn), financed partly through junk bonds.

Depending on what conditions were imposed, PacificCorp could seek to renegotiate the price. Some analysts have suggested it might have to pay more. However, Fred Backman, PacificCorp's chief executive, has argued that the price may have to fall.

Since the deal was announced in June

the regulator Professor Stephen Littlechild, has announced new price caps which will further reduce domestic bills by 13 per cent over the next two years.

Energy Group shares are trading at 636.5p compared with the 695.5p that PacificCorp's bid valued them at in June.

Power Gen, the third biggest generator with a market share of 19 per cent, is pressing the Government to be allowed to buy a REC after the merger. The previous administration from acquiring Midlands Electricity. At least two US owned RECs - Seaboard and WESCO - are known to be on the market.

— Michael Harrison

US Justice Department tries to nail Microsoft with e-mail

The US Justice Department yesterday produced new evidence in an effort to bolster its anti-trust case against the computer giant, Microsoft. Mary Dejevsky in Washington reports on progress of the lawsuit.

The new evidence cited by the Justice Department is an internal Microsoft e-mail dated from 1996. It was sent by Jim Allchin, a company executive,

who asked how the company could possibly gain a bigger market share for its Internet Explorer software - the Internet browser that was then losing out to a rival product from Netscape Communications.

Mr Allchin is quoted as saying: "My conclusion is that we must leverage Windows more. Treating IE [Internet Explorer] as just an add-on to Windows which is cross-platform is losing our biggest advantage - Windows market share."

The memo appears to support the US government's case that Microsoft threatened to

withhold its products from computer manufacturers who would not incorporate Internet Explorer with Windows software.

The record of the e-mail was among new papers filed by the Justice Department with the US District Court in Washington late on Thursday. The department's anti-trust division asked the judge for a quick ruling that Microsoft broke the terms of a two-year old Federal Court order designed to prevent Microsoft's domination of the computer software market becoming a monopoly.

Mark Murray, a Microsoft spokesman, said he had not yet

reviewed the latest evidence supplied by the Justice Department, but implied that it had misinterpreted the e-mail. The communication proved only that an executive had made a proposal. It did not prove that using the leverage of Windows to squeeze out other Internet browsers had been even considered, let alone made company policy.

In its latest filing, the Justice Department also took issue with Microsoft's earlier defence. Soon after receiving notice that it was being sued for breaching the terms of a 1995 court order, Microsoft insisted that the court

order specifically allowed it to develop "integrated software" - software that would be incorporated into computers before sale to make up a complete hardware/software package.

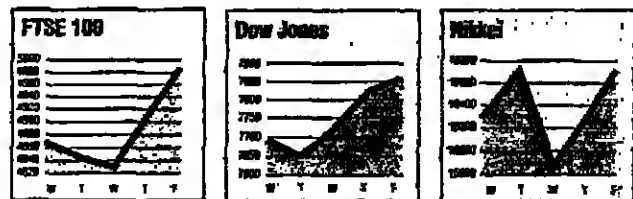
The new government papers accuse Microsoft of using the court order retrospectively. "The basic fallacy in Microsoft's position," it says, "is that it confuses... the court order's prohibition on coercive marketing practices with the assurance of the proviso that Microsoft will be free to develop new, integrated products."

In other words, Microsoft was free to develop new

software integrated into and sold with its Windows programme, but this did not include the browser. Microsoft says that it did.

For the US government, the suit against Microsoft is a crucial test of its power to enforce regulation. It is a pioneering attempt to preserve an element of competition in the multi-billion dollar new technology market, where Microsoft Windows has, in effect, become the world standard and any company supplying another system finds it hard to gain even a foothold in the market.

STOCK MARKETS



Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	4895.90	77.40	1.59	5367.20	2892.70	3.51
US	4865.70	23.40	0.48	5363.00	3271.80	3.42
FTSE 250	2399.50	32.40	1.37	2570.50	1836.70	3.48
FTSE All Share	2344.82	29.30	1.25	2507.88	1942.22	3.48
FTSE SmallCap	2279.0	4.30	0.19	2407.40	2127.50	3.23
FTSE Realind	1293.0	3.80	0.29	1346.50	1199.70	3.24
FTSE AIM	867.4	-1.50	-0.15	1138.00	955.90	1.76
Dow Jones	7854.70	28.34	0.37	8298.08	6298.05	1.73
Nikkei	16721.58	413.09	2.53	21480.57	14968.18	0.92
Hang Seng	10548.20	497.52	4.95	18820.5	8775.88	4.01
Asia	3525.69	43.75	1.12	4450.80	2756.11	2.81

INTEREST RATES



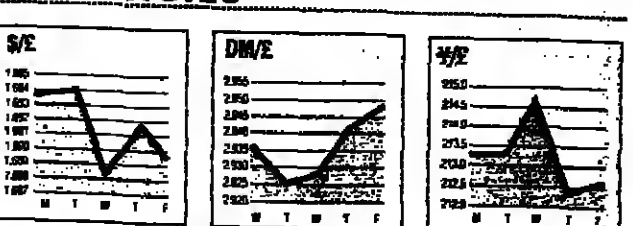
Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	3 yr	5 yr	10 yr	15 yr	20 yr
UK	7.69	7.27	7.23	6.93	6.54	6.51	6.47
US	6.88	6.38	6.00	5.32	5.85	5.28	5.07
Japan	0.47	0.03	0.03	0.03	1.97	0.75	0.78
Germany	3.75	0.57	4.10	0.76	5.52	0.33	0.72

Bond Yields	1 yr	3 yr	5 yr	10 yr	15 yr	20 yr
UK	6.47	6.51	6.54	6.93	7.23	7.27
US	5.07	5.28	5.85	6.51	6.54	6.88
Japan	0.75	0.78	1.97	5.28	5.32	5.85
Germany	0.72	0.33	5.52	0.76	4.10	3.75

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Allied Domecq 565.00 24.00 4.40	Allied Colloids 126.00 -13.50 -10.68
Bodycote Int 887.50 57.50 6.48	GLS Int 150.00 -7.50 -4.76
Standard Chart 728.00 36.00 5.20	Sumitomo Chemical 95.00 -4.00 -4.18
Imperial Chem 898.00 42.00 4.90	Seas 51.5 -2 -3.74

CURRENCIES



Pound	100 Yen	100 Swiss	100 DM	100 NZ	100 HK	100 S\$
Dollar	1.6896	-0.246	1.6892	0.5919	+0.126	0.5823
D-Mark	2.9483	+1.184	2.5809	1.7480	+1.174	1.5071
Yen	212.55	-2.01	187.79	125.90	-10.94	111.35
E Index	104.30	+0.30	92.80	106.30	0.00	95.90

OTHER INDICATORS

Commodities	Change	Oil	Gold	Silver	Base Rates
Brent Oil (\$)	18.57	-0.11	27.70	113.90	3.80 109.7
Gold (\$)	305.05	1.50	376.25	159.50	3.7 159.81
Silver (\$)	5.25	0.02	4.93	Base Rates	7.25 8.00

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

UBS reveals how it lost £90m in 'one-off' error

Union Bank of Switzerland yesterday split out how it lost almost £100m in equity derivatives trading. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports on a trading débacle that has already claimed four scalps this week.

UBS revealed for the first time yesterday the extent of the losses suffered in its equity derivatives business. It said the losses in the first half of this year were \$F720m (£90m), but added that the incident was a "one-off".

Werner Bonadurer, head of UBS's trading and sales and risk management services, said: "I am very confident this was a one-off event. Our controlling structure is very good." Mr Bonadurer said the losses in the first half were caused by valuation adjustments due to a change in UK tax laws and by a "calculation error" in one of its options pricing models that led to increased hedging costs.

UBS had left markets guessing earlier this year when its first half report to shareholders said

equity derivatives turned in an "unsatisfactory performance" but failed to quantify the problem.

The bank said it was moving to lessen the chances of any repeat of the affair by centralising proprietary trading in equities.

The derivatives losses have claimed the jobs of three traders at the bank's New York office. In addition, Hans-Peter Bauer, the bank's head of fixed income, currencies and derivatives, has replaced Ramy Goldstein in charge of the London derivatives operation.

The scant details yesterday came as UBS announced an upbeat forecast for its full-year performance but disappointed investors by failing to announce a long-rumoured "blockbuster" takeover deal.

Speaking at the bank's annual autumn conference, Mathis Caballavetta, chief executive, said the bank had been frustrated in its bid for a big takeover in asset management and private banking services. "The time was not right for the major acquisition which many people expected," he said. He added that UBS had studied a range of opportunities includ-

ing Scudder Stevens & Clark, the US asset manager snapped up by insurer Zurich Group in June. But it had decided not to pursue any of them.

Analysts said the comments could be interpreted as saying that UBS had abandoned, for now, ambitions of a big deal.

The bank, however, yesterday did announce a smaller deal to buy Alfi Gestion, the French asset manager, for Fr358m (£36.5m). Alfi Gestion has 80 staff and manages assets of around Fr30bn.

The size of the deal disappointed analysts who had been hoping for a statement on the Liechtenstein-based LGT which has said it is selling its global asset management business, with \$65bn in client funds, in order to concentrate on private banking. "We had expected something on LGT and there was all this talk of Merrill Lynch and they go and buy a French boutique," one trader said.

Mr Caballavetta said that trading results in the first nine months were 8 per cent higher than last year. He forecast that UBS would post net profits of around \$F73.2bn for the full year. That would compare with a \$F7348m loss last year.

Cider makers' directors pressed for time

Merrydown, the troubled cider group, has been forced to delay the announcement of its financial results due to an embarrassing administrative error.

The company had informed the Stock Exchange that it planned to announce its interim results for the six months to 30 September on Monday. Lodge, the group's City public relations advisers, also sent letters to analysts and journalists inviting them to briefings on the same date.

However, the group's directors, including Richard Purdey, chairman, Paul Millman, managing director, and Mike Dennis, finance director, had failed to check their diaries and realised they could not all

attend the meetings on that day.

There were red faces all round yesterday as Merrydown was forced to announce to the Stock Exchange that it would not unveil its figures until the following week on 2 December.

Mr Purdey said: "It was a cock-up with our diaries on the day." A spokeswoman for the group from Lodge added: "There is nothing sinister going on."

The mistake could not have come at a worse time for Merrydown, which has been rocked by falling sales of the controversial Two Dogs lemonade in the wake of a public outcry against alcopops and intense competition from other cider groups.

Merrydown's shares closed at a 15-year low yesterday, falling 1p to 50p. The share price has plummeted from 112.5p earlier this year and more than 400p in the early 1990s.

A drinks analyst said: "It has been a catalogue of disasters at Merrydown and this will not help their cause."

And one industry observer quipped: "This lot would have trouble pressing their trousers let alone pressing apples."

Merrydown has embarked on a management shake-out as part of a £1.5m cost cutting program announced this summer designed to restore its flagging fortunes.

— Andrew Yates

Penny share seller fined a record £350,000

City regulators yesterday dealt out a record fine for a company engaged in selling penny shares. It is the fourth substantial fine for financial advisers selling stocks with low share prices.

In one of its last acts as a working regulator, Fimbra, which regulated independent financial advisers until July 1994, levied a fine of £350,000 against London Corporate Securities of 82 Great Eastern Street, London.

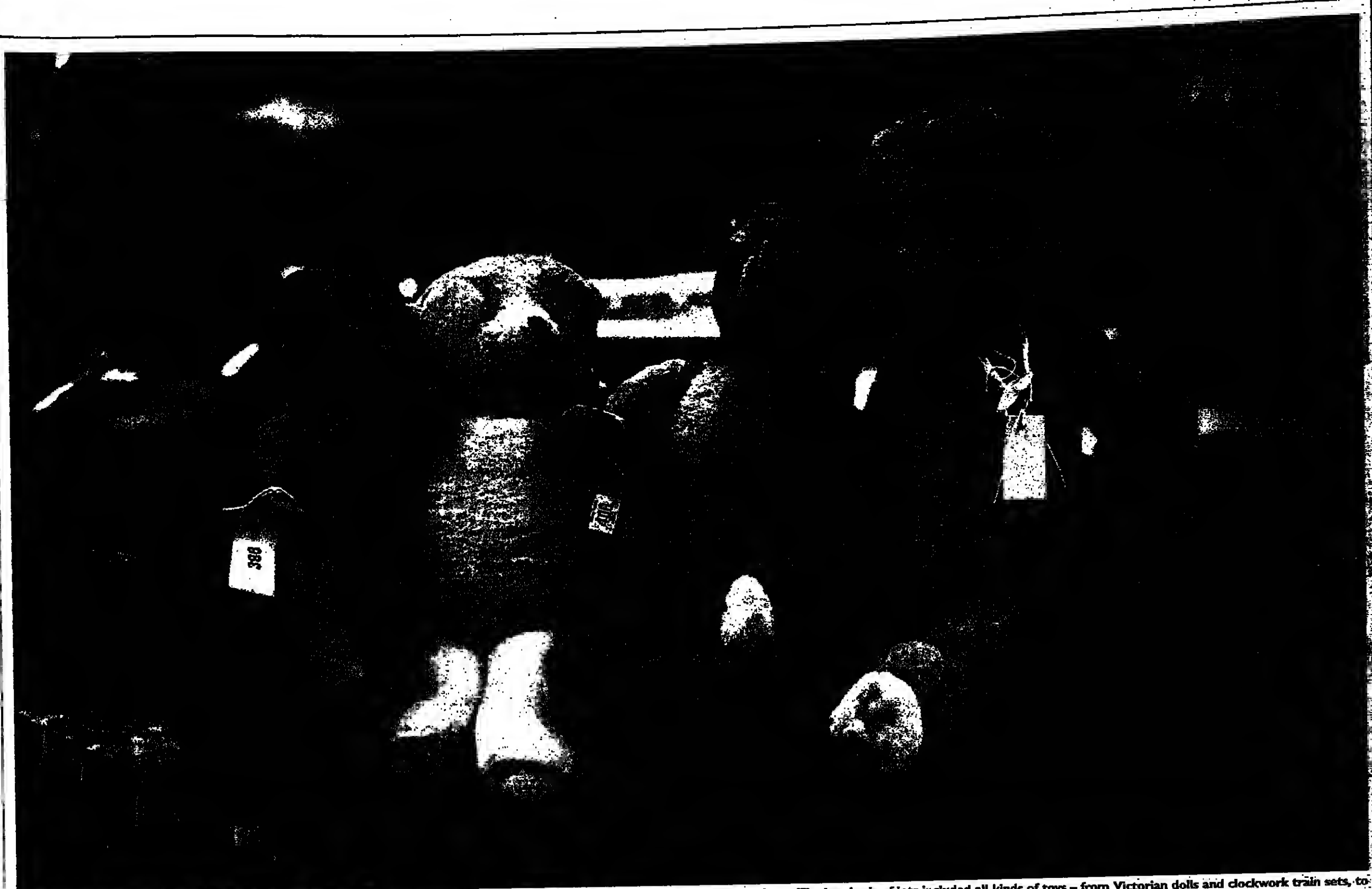
The firm, which has never been registered to do business under the current regulator, the Personal Investment Authority, was also ordered to pay costs of £69,175.

Fimbra said the firm had sold penny shares without a reason to think its clients would benefit from buying the shares. It failed to find out basic information about its clients, failed to explain the risks of buy-

ing penny shares and failed to supervise its staff.

Since April, two other firms dealing in penny shares - Park Equity Services of Tunbridge Wells and City Equities of London - have each been fined £250,000.

London-based Danesfield securities was fined £75,000 last month by Fimbra, which was formally de-recognised last week.



Bear essentials: Four teddies sitting on display at the Christmas Collectors' Auction yesterday at Saffron Walden Auctions, in Essex. The hundreds of lots included all kinds of toys - from Victorian dolls and clockwork train sets, to James Bond Aston Martin model cars (with the little driver intact), and these French and German teddy bears. The photograph, by Brian Harris, was taken with a 35mm lens, at 1/60th of a second, at f2, on Fuji 800 ASA film. To order a print of this photograph phone 0171-293 2534

The Royal Opera - 2 for 1 ticket offer Save up to £75

The Independent and Independent on Sunday are giving you the opportunity to experience the opera. In association with The Royal Opera we are offering you 2 tickets for the price of 1 to the Autumn and Winter 1997/98 season. You can choose to see any of three productions - The Merry Widow, The Barber of Seville and Paul Bunyan all showing at the Shaftesbury Theatre.

How to Qualify

For each 2 for 1 ticket application simply collect 3 tokens from the Independent and Independent on Sunday (tokens will be printed every day until Friday 28 November) and telephone The Royal Opera House box office on either 0171 304 4000 or 0171 379 5399 (lines are open between 10am and 7pm) identifying yourself as an Independent reader. If paying by credit card you will be asked to hand in your tokens when you collect your tickets. If paying by cheque please enclose your three tokens (you will be advised of the address when booking). You may apply twice for the offer, collecting 3 tokens per application.



Paul Bunyan

Offer available 10 11 13 15 17 December
Ticket Prices: £48.50, £39, £36, £32, £18.50

Paul Bunyan is an American folk hero of gigantic height who became the greatest lumberjack in history, or so legend says. His work sites, and his fights, created geographical wonders like the Grand Canyon and the Rockies. These tall stories about a new country appealed to two young Englishmen in exile in wartime America - Benjamin Britten and the poet W. H. Auden.

Bunyan's adventures are an allegory of the development of virgin North America in the pioneer days. Auden loved both Shakespeare's Prospero and the Christian God. His Bunyan (who speaks but never appears) is both of these, with a touch of Moses thrown in. There's rich comedy too, as Auden writes roles for trees, geese, dogs, cats, bicycling boys and taciturn Swedish loggers.

Paul Bunyan was a first opera for Britten, but it's no early work. The music has all the range of Auden's witty verse and Bunyan's multi-national workforce. You hear an American blues alongside parodies of 19th-century Italian opera and G & S. There's a stirring role for the chorus. And the central battle between intellectual Johnny Inkslinger (the brains of Bunyan's camp) and foreman Hel Helson (the brawn) clearly looks forward to Peter Grimes - just four years in the future.



The Merry Widow

Photograph: Laurie Lewis

The Royal Opera

The Merry Widow

Offer available 31 December 1 2 3 5 6 7 8 9 10 January
Ticket prices: £65, £58, £56, £57, £30

Like The Barber of Seville, The Merry Widow is a first. Most operettas are about sex and money, but few as provocatively as Lehar's. The story takes place in embassy circles in turn of the century Paris. It discusses the affairs of a romantic little principdom fit to rival Rudolf Rassendyl's Ruritania in The Prisoner of Zenda (book and operetta) are near contemporaries. Its music is awash with gorgeous tunes - and wonderful dances - evoking middle-European folklore, written with the skill of a Richard Strauss or Puccini (more contemporaries). The very word 'operetta' means escapism - usually.

But what's best about the Widow is its realism. Its heroine has been married before for all the worst reasons - on the rebound from an unhappy affair, and for money. Its hero met the heroine before and rejected her for all the worst reasons - family pressure, and money - and then went off on a seriously naughty bender in Paris. He loves her, but can't bring himself to say it. Meanwhile, everyone else in sight is bending over backwards to be unfaithful. It's realistic, it's funny and it's sad. This perfect theatrical combination gave Lehar a monster hit in Vienna, Paris, London and New York.

The Barber of Seville

Offer available on 7 10 12 14 February
Ticket prices: £75, £66, £62, £57, £33.

The Barber of Seville is the first modern comic opera. Rossini was the star composer of an era when opera moved out of aristocratic circles into boulevard theatres. His comic skill was praised by Beethoven and imitated by Schubert. He believed his audiences would laugh at what they could recognise. He chose a hit French play by Beaumarchais, a controversial writer whose work had scandalised the old order in France before the Revolution.

In this play, the professional classes and the young outsmart the aristocracy and the old. Rossini kept the play's title, plot, scenes and sharpest lines. Unusual - because comic operas often sweeten their subject beyond recognition. Rossini avoided this cliché. He has the cunning young girl, the greedy old lecher who wants to marry her, the wily servant with the keys to the house and the 'poor' young man hanging around who's really a prince. They're classic characters from commedia dell'arte who have been around from Shakespeare to television sitcom. Rossini's music defines all of them without caricature and makes them available to any age.

Terms and Conditions

To qualify for the offer applicants must collect three differently numbered tokens. Tokens are published every day between November 22 and November 28. Only the tokens printed in The Independent and Independent on Sunday are valid. Photocopies or any other reproductions will not be accepted. The offer is for 2 tickets for the price of 1 for each application. Each set of three tokens collected allows you to take advantage of the 2 for 1 offer. The free ticket may only have a value equal to or less than the purchased ticket. This offer is only valid for the three productions mentioned above. The Royal Opera House standard terms and conditions of purchase apply to this offer. The offer is subject to availability. No cash alternatives will be accepted. The promoters are The Independent and The Royal Opera House.

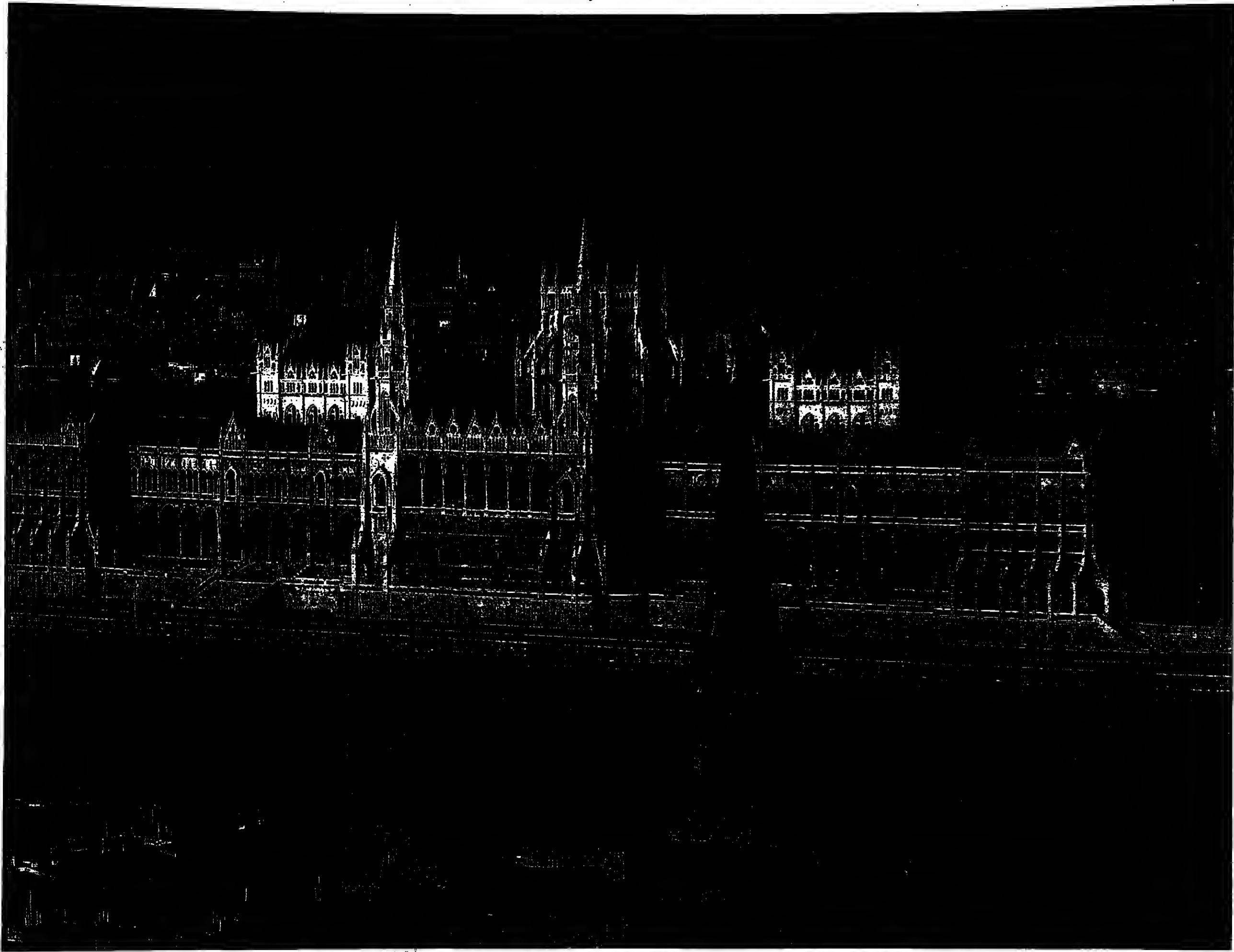




TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 22 November 1997



Dividing line: the Danube separates Budapest's two halves, with the Westminsteresque parliament building on the Pest side serving as something of a monument to the grand days of the Austro-Hungarian empire Photographs: G. Helian/RHPL

Slicing through the city of cakes

Budapest is steeped in turn-of-the-century ambience and populated by stout citizens. Yet it does not demand heavy-duty sightseeing. *Cathy Pocke* plunges into a city plump with nostalgia.

Thanks to the efforts of Johann Strauss and his family, the Danube has always been associated with Vienna. Strange, this, since there the river is little more than a broad, murky stream trickling through an outer suburb. Yet in Budapest it defines and divides the city, linking this geographical centre of Europe with east and west.

Unlike the other great Habsburg cities of Vienna and Prague, Budapest is not a place where there is any real need for serious sightseeing; much of the considerable charm of the city is in its atmosphere. You can see most of the main buildings from the river, and this is the best way to get acquainted with the layout of the city.

Boats leave regularly from Vigado square, on the Pest side of the river between the Chain and Elizabeth bridges. Although a timetable of sorts exists, they seem to operate on a shuttle basis: when a boat is full it sets off, and another one appears to take the remaining passengers. Sightseeing trips, which go up the river and back again, never leaving the city limits, take about an hour and a half, but if you have the time, a far more rewarding trip – and better value for money – is to go north as far as Szentendre or Visegrad.

As the boat heads through the city, you can see the main landmarks on the skyline: on the Pest side, the Parliament building, a Westminsteresque monument to the grand days of the Austro-Hungarian empire. On the opposite bank, perched on top of Castle Hill, is the more austere Royal Palace, now housing the National Library, and several of Hungary's national museums. Next along, the Matthias Church, with its distinctive tiled roof, named after a Hungarian king from the 15th century, and scene of various royal events over the centuries. The Liberation Monument is further along, on top

of Gellert Hill. A kind of dual-purpose memorial, this was intended originally as a homage to Hungary's wartime dictator, but subsequent events caused it to be altered during the construction process to become a memorial to the Red Army.

Slightly lower down the same hill is the Gellert memorial, a statue of the 10th-century priest who was created a bishop by the first Hungarian king, Stephen. After the death of the king, there was a rebellion against Gellert, and he was pushed over the hilltop; perhaps, if he had chosen to live on the latter side of the river, history might have turned out differently. Nevertheless his statue still stands overlooking the city, holding a cross to protect the citizens of Budapest from further ill fortune.

Built into the hill itself is a chapel where ancient and modern meet. A labyrinth of small chapels known as the Cave Church was originally home to Hungary's only monastic order. At midnight on Easter Monday, 1951, it was stormed by the secret police; many of the worshippers were imprisoned, and the priest was murdered. It reopened in 1989.

The city's many bathhouses continued to function through the communist era. They are fed

by some of the 100-odd thermal springs in Buda. The most famous – and certainly the most interesting architecturally – are those at the Art Nouveau Gellert Hotel, on the Buda side of Liberty Bridge. The baths are a legacy of the Ottoman occupation in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Moslems had to obey strict rules of cleanliness before going to prayers.

Taking a bath here today is a complicated matter, and the ritual is confusing since there are no instructions to help you – not even in Hungarian. Meanwhile, the staff lack the charm of their surroundings. If you are lucky you may be allocated a locker, and you will be given a sort of minuscule apron to wear; this is, apparently, intended to preserve your modesty, but it would hardly cover the most sylph-like of bathers – which, it has to be said, most of the locals are not. Its main practical purpose seems to be to stop your buttocks getting scorched on the searingly hot wooden benches of the three, ever-hotter saunas.

When you can stand the discomfort no more you head for the shower to have a thorough wash (bring your own soap) before soaking for a while in the warm mineral pools.

The next torture is the steam room, where

you stay until the thought of plunging into an icy pool seems like a relief. At the end of all this you may feel like a massage, although persuading any of the surly staff to give you one could seem like too much of a challenge. The best time to go to the baths is early in the morning (they open at 6am), when most tourists are still in bed, but the citizens of Budapest are out in force.

There is nothing like sweating off a few calories to build up an appetite. As in the rest of central Europe, the cuisine tends to be heavy. And though there is a mouthwatering collection of fruit and vegetables on display in the central market every day, few of these seem to find their way on to restaurant tables.

The cakes, on the other hand, are spectacular. To get an idea of the range you only have to look at the menu at the well-known Gerbeaud café in Vorosmari Square. It doesn't just have a list of cakes – there are simply whole sections devoted to tarts, cream puddings, chestnut cakes, mixed pastries – the choice is endless.

While the Gerbeaud looks like a relic of another age, the street scenes you see from its terrace present a view of unromantic, modern life. By day the square below, and the pedestrian streets radiating from it, are full of people going to work, going shopping, meeting friends. But as it gets dark you start to see groups of girls in low-cut dresses and short skirts, parading up and down looking for business.

When you can tear yourself away from watching the world go by, it is worth meandering around Budapest to admire the architecture. Although there are some hideous examples of post-war buildings, these are relatively few, and on the whole there's a nostalgic air of glamour, with long avenues of grand, 19th-century facades, updated with touches of Art Nouveau in the windows and balconies. Best of all, wander into the grand Parisi Udvar, a covered shopping arcade, where the barrel-shaped glass dome and tiled floor now have neon highlights. It's a very Budapest detail, reminding you that, after all, this is a living city, not a museum.

BOUND FOR BUDAPEST

Getting there
British Airways (0345 222111) and Malev (0171-439 0577) each operates two daily flights between London Heathrow and Budapest. The lowest fare, including tax, on Malev is £209.20, and £20 more on British Airways.

Accommodation
Cathy Pocke paid £180 for a three-night package at the Gellert Hotel (00 36 1 85 2200), including breakfasts and one dinner.

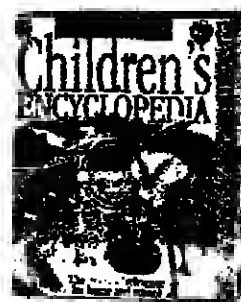
Getting around
The Budapest Card offers unlimited public

transport, free admission to 55 museums and reductions for the airport minibus and thermal baths. It costs around £8 for two days, £10 for three. The best tram journey is route two, which rattles along from the market, alongside the Danube, to the parliament building. **More information**
Call the Hungarian National Tourist Office in the UK (0891 171200), if you don't mind paying 50p per minute. Or wait until you get to Budapest; there is a useful information bureau at the Western railway station.

Now there's an easier way to give your child a world of knowledge



All this knowledge and so much more is packed into the new *Encyclopedia Britannica's* Children's Encyclopedia. It's on PC CD-ROM. Designed specially for ages 7-11, the encyclopedia supports the School Curriculum and has been created specifically for the U.K. Bursting with interactive adventures, it will pave the way to success at school. Learning need never be a burden again.



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EDUCATION MEETS IMAGINATION

INSIDE SOUTH AMERICA BRITAIN
Ecuador, Bolivia/4 Isle of Arran/7

RAC RALLY
McRae's challenge/23

RUGBY UNION
Awesome All Blacks/24



SIMON CALDER

If you find yourself in west London between 1am and 4am, you could well see a ghost train race past. Heathrow Express is testing the new Spanish-built trains for its no-stop link from Paddington station to the airport. But the habit of running trains with no passengers is spreading to the rest of the network.

Rumours have abounded all week that Eurostar is to scrap its planned services from Edinburgh and Manchester direct to Paris - three years after they were due to begin. The company denies the story, and says regional services will start in the New Year. Earlier this year Eurostar cancelled connecting trains from various parts of Britain to Waterloo, ostensibly in preparation for the direct services. To fill the void, one of the new train operating companies, Wales and West, launched a new Manchester to Waterloo train. But the National Rail Enquiry service (0345 484950) is doing its best to make sure no one ever travels on it.

Each time the rail enquiry service is found to be failing to meet its targets, and is fined by the rail regulator, promises are made about future performance. But these vows seem to be as empty as the 7.59am from Manchester Piccadilly.

Six separate calls to try to find out the fare all resulted in the blunt assertion: "There is no train from Manchester to Waterloo." You begin to wonder whether the new service is a work of fiction in the great tradition of British Rail timetables.

If you ask for a number for Wales & West, you are told to ring 01222 430090. This phone line - which has a human being answering for only three hours a day - refers you back to the number you first thought of. By now, the search for someone to (a) acknowledge the existence of the 7.59am from Manchester, (b) sell you a ticket for it, has taken considerably longer than the time it takes to fly between the two cities.

The lowest fare on Air UK's Manchester to London City route is £65 return. Book instantly on 0990 074074.

Airlines and railways do not always compete, particularly when you are Richard Branson. If you want to travel from London to Los Angeles, or from Oxford to Edinburgh, the Virgin brand can get you there. But, writes Sara Barker, of Oxford, it may not be able to get you back.

"I wanted to go from Oxford to Edinburgh on Friday, returning on Sunday."

The appropriate ticket is a SuperAdvance, which requires you to book a particular train in both directions. "I could reserve the northbound journey... but after speaking to Great Western Trains, Thames Trains, ScotRail and Virgin Trains, I realised that although a train departed at 10.30am, changing at Birmingham, it was impossible to book it". Eventually, in all seriousness, a ScotRail official suggested she returned on Monday instead - and an exasperated Ms Barker agreed. Her ticket, when it arrived, bore the cryptic message, "Unspecified restrictions apply".

The timetable describes the service she had wanted: "Expected to be very busy. Seat reservations are therefore recommended." Since reservations are impossible, I suspect it will be as busy as those ghostly Heathrow Expresses.

How to be a tourist, not a terrorist's target

Only journalists and the mentally unstable would ever wish to visit nations engaged in full-scale civil war. But this week the front line moved frighteningly closer to the tourist. Simon Calder reports on where travellers are most at risk.

Last Monday was the bloodiest day in a campaign by Islamic extremists against tourists to Egypt. By the end of this winter's high season, the terrorists will be seen to have "won" the battle to wound the Egyptian economy. If, as seems possible, the 3.6 million people who usually visit the country each year is cut to one-sixth, then 5 per cent of the country's gross domestic product will be wiped out.

These are the cold figures concealing the dozens of individual tragedies arising from the massacre in Luxor. Some have said that tourists should not give the terrorists the "oxygen of publicity", and that tourism to Egypt should continue as normal.

In a perfectly collective world there would be merit in this argument, since one terrifyingly inevitable consequence of this week's attack will be

to inspire other terrorist groups around the world to target tourists. But choosing a holiday should never be a matter of life and death; repeated, highly targeted attacks on foreign tourists in Egypt suggest that there is a small but tangible risk of visiting the country.

Politically, attacking foreign visitors brings world attention to bear on a cause; economically, scaring away potential visitors can maintain an economy. Tourists are being used as pawns in wider political struggles.

Cuba Following the collapse of Cuba's economic patron, the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro seized upon tourism as the way to escape from the economic abyss. Remarkably, this policy appeared to be succeeding - which made the tourist industry a natural target for opponents to the regime, of whom there are many.

The safest country in the Caribbean has, in the past two years, become the target of attacks on hotels and other tourist installations. An Italian tourist died earlier this year in a bomb attack on a Havana hotel. The perpetrators are believed to come from among

the more shadowy anti-Castro Cuban exiles based in Florida.

Egypt The campaign by Islamic extremists against tourists began five years ago, and has become increasingly sophisticated. Monday's attack seems to have been timed to coincide with the opening of the World Travel Market in London, the world's largest travel industry gathering. Most attacks have been on clearly identifiable targets, such as tourist minibuses. It may, therefore, be safer to travel independently, using public transport.

Peru The Shining Path, a Maoist guerrilla organisation, started the tourists-as-targets ball rolling in the Eighties, when it declared a policy of killing foreign visitors. Two British visitors were murdered in the Huallaga Valley by terrorists. But in the 17 years of conflict, fewer visitors have died here than in Florida in a single year.

Sri Lanka In 1982, 400,000 tourists visited the island. The

country then plunged into a long and bloody civil war, waged between the government and the Tamil Tigers, and it took 12 years before that number of visitors was equalled - when growth figures elsewhere in the region would suggest a 50 per cent increase.

Hotels have occasionally been targeted, but the main threat has been of being caught up in large bombings in the capital, Colombo.

Parts of the island are still out of bounds except to the foolhardy, but much of it is unblemished and uncrowded.

Turkey A British tourist was killed in the southern resort of Marmaris in 1994, a victim of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) campaign of targeting tourists in Istanbul and Mediterranean resort areas as part of its campaign for a separate Kurdish state in south-east Turkey.

For official Foreign Office warnings, contact the Travel Advice Unit on 0171-238 4503 or 4504, or fax 0171-238 4545; on the Internet, at <http://www.fco.gov.uk> or on BBC-2 Ceefax from page 470 onwards.



Egypt's Temple of Hatshepsut: Monday's massacre may have been timed to coincide with the start of the World Travel Market in London

Photograph: Associated Press

GREEN CHANNEL

The green tourism dream found itself rolled out and banged around for one day at the world's largest travel trade exhibition, The World Travel Market, this week. Green Globe, the environmental arm of the World Travel and Tourism Council - made up of the world's top 200 tourism corporations - organised an environmental debate and environmental "clinics" for tourism executives waiting to green up their act. Environmental awareness and community becom-

fits should go hand in hand, they said. But there's obviously a long way to go.

True, Scandic Hotels (represented at the debate, and a member of Green Globe) runs its hotels with environmental management at its core. Forte Hotels is also a member - a founding one, in fact. But it came out in the debate that a proposed five-mile, \$368m development in Nungwi, northern Zanzibar, in which Forte Meridien is involved, is set to rock its green credentials. Plans are afoot for a presidential-style hotel, an ocean marina, 200 condominiums, 300 luxury villas, a conference centre, a 27-hole golf course and a

country club on one of the world's most exquisite coastlines. Local people who live on the peninsula say that they have not been consulted about the development, have not heard of any environmental assessments, and are expecting to be ousted from their homes. Forte Hotels was nominated the world's best hotel chain during WTM week.

Theo there were the World Travel Market Environmental Awards, and who should be one of the winners but Aitken Spence Hotel Management. Never heard of them? You would have if you lived in the Dambulla region of Sri Lanka, where they

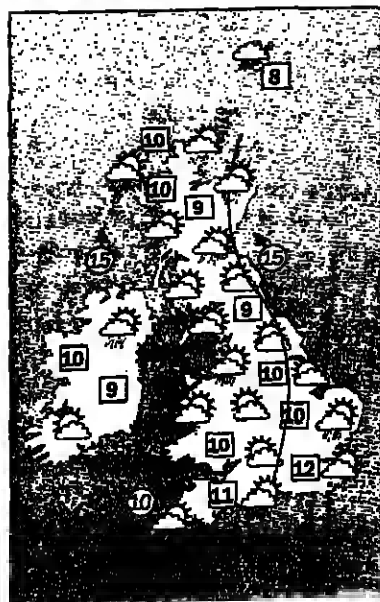
built the Kandakumbura hotel on a sacred site over a local reservoir, despite the fact that around 50,000 local people protested against it.

Up the escalator to Asia, and there stood Myanmar (the name given to Burma by the military junta), where tourism has been developed by forcing civilians to labour on construction projects and moving millions of people out of their homes to make way for roads and hotels. How was it described in the literature on the stall? Yes, wait for it: "an ecotourist's paradise".

Sue Wheat

WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



Lighting-up times

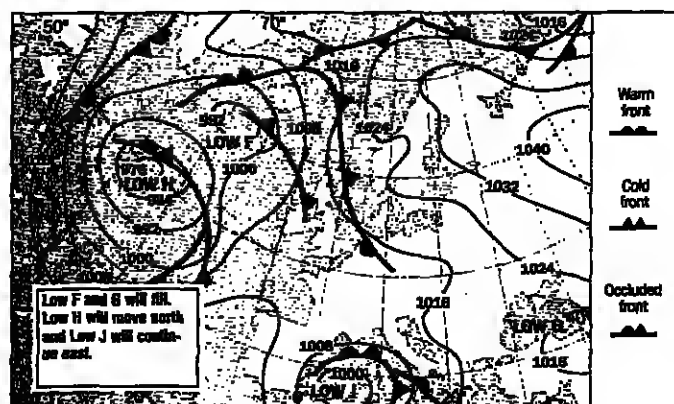
Today	Tomorrow
Aberdeen 16.03 to 7.32	16.02 to 7.33
Belfast 16.13 to 7.41	16.12 to 7.43
Birmingham 16.05 to 7.49	16.04 to 7.51
Cardiff 16.03 to 7.55	16.01 to 7.53
Edinburgh 16.52 to 8.09	16.57 to 8.11
Glasgow 15.59 to 8.09	16.11 to 8.09
London 16.12 to 7.32	16.02 to 7.33
Manchester 16.03 to 7.49	16.01 to 7.51
Newcastle 16.52 to 8.09	16.57 to 8.11
Sheffield 16.12 to 7.32	16.02 to 7.33

General summary and outlook

It will be a dry day in many eastern areas, with only a very small chance of a brief shower, and there will be some decent spells of sunshine. South-west England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the north and west of Scotland will see occasional showers, but there will still be spells of sunshine in between. However, a brief heavy downpour is possible in these parts. A few showers will drift along the English Channel, perhaps bringing a splash of rain to some southern coastal areas.

Most parts will be dry and chilly but with plenty of sunshine on Sunday. However, east coasts of England and Scotland will have more in the way of cloud and some light showers. Rain will affect western Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and south-west England on Monday, but apart from the odd shower along east coasts, elsewhere it will be dry with some sunshine. Tuesday will be dry and cold in most parts with some sunshine, but showers are likely along east coasts of Scotland and England.

Atlantic chart, noon today



World weather most recent available figure at noon local time

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	10.84	10.86	10.88	New York	10.88	10.88
Aldershot	10.86	10.86	10.88	Norwich	10.88	10.88
Belfast	10.86	10.86	10.88	Paris	10.88	10.88
Birmingham	10.86	10.86	10.88	Prague	10.88	10.88
Bristol	10.86	10.86	10.88	Reykjavik	10.88	10.88
Cardiff	10.86	10.86	10.88	Rio de Janeiro	10.88	10.88
Edinburgh	10.86	10.86	10.88	Riyadh	10.88	10.88
Glasgow	10.86	10.86	10.88	Rome	10.88	10.88
London	10.86	10.86	10.88	Sao Paulo	10.88	10.88
Manchester	10.86	10.86	10.88	Sydney	10.88	10.88
Newcastle	10.86	10.86	10.88	Tokyo	10.88	10.88
Sheffield	10.86	10.86	10.88	Vienna	10.88	10.88
Southampton	10.86	10.86	10.88	Warsaw	10.88	10.88
Stirling	10.86	10.86	10.88	Washington	10.88	10.88
Swansea	10.86	10.86	10.88	Wellington	10.88	10.88
Torquay	10.86	10.86	10.88	Zurich	10.88	10.88

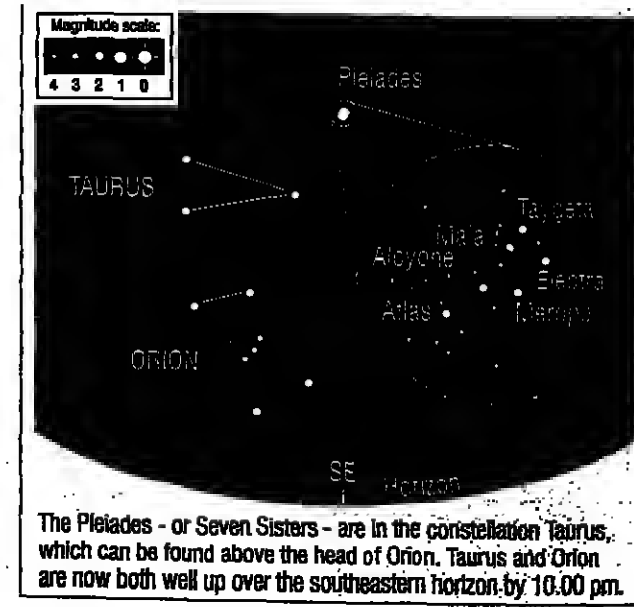
AA Roadwatch

London, A1 between Watford Way, Mill Hill and Watlington. A contraflow and a 50mph speed limit are in place until 13th July 1998.

Greater London, M1 between J4-J5, Watlington. A contraflow and a 50mph speed limit are in place until 13th July 1998.

Greater London, M1 between J4-J5, Watlington. A contraflow and a 50mph speed limit are in place until 13th July 1998.

The sky at night



The Pleiades - or Seven Sisters - are in the constellation Taurus, which can be found above the head of Orion. Taurus and Orion are now both well up over the southeastern horizon by 10.00 pm.

The compact ensemble of the Pleiades is the best known and most easily identifiable of all star clusters - a celestial "landmark" in the night skies of late autumn and winter. Records referring to them go back at least as far as 1000BC, and they merit three mentions in the Bible. "Can't you bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?" questions Job (Ch 38, v 31). If you are in any doubt about locating the Pleiades, follow Orion's belt upwards, through Taurus. A pair of binoculars turned upon them should reveal 10 or 20 of the brightest members from a total of several hundred. On long exposure photographs, the Pleiades are seen to be embedded in a cloud of wispy interstellar gas, rendered visible by their starlight-like dust in a spotlight beam, but this faint ocholosity is not apparent to visual observers using modest binoculars or telescopes.

Jacqueline Mitton

3/CITY BREAK



America's greatest city: Chicago possesses the critical mass of energy and culture that New York thinks it has UCI/TC

48 hours in the life of Chicago

Chicago, the musical? A ticket to Chicago the city is possibly easier to get, and probably even more fun. For this week's prescription for the perfect weekend break, Simon Calder spends 48 hours in America's greatest city.

Why go now?

Because today the lights on State Street are switched on, adding to Chicago's claim to be the best place on earth to do your Christmas shopping. Because until mid-December, transatlantic airlines are almost giving away flights to the United States. And because Chicago possesses the critical mass of energy and culture that New York thinks it has.

Beam down

The new Air India flight from Heathrow to Chicago seems custom-made for the weekend. The 747 flies out at noon on Friday and returns overnight on Sunday. Through discount agents such as Welcome Travel (0171-439 3637), you can get the flight for £253 including a multitude of taxes; and, if you decide to stay longer, you can change your return date without penalty.

In response, the other airlines are cutting their fares for travel within the next month: American Airlines from Gatwick, Heathrow, Manchester and Glasgow; and British Airways and United from Heathrow.

Get your bearings

O'Hare is the world's busiest airport (ignore any representations to the contrary by Heathrow). You will probably arrive at Terminal 5, which has a tourist information centre of sorts. It also has the worst-value bureau de change I have ever encountered: £1 coins are changed at the rate of £1 for \$1.

The journey into the centre is most ably achieved by the CTA subway train, a bargain at \$1.50 to anywhere in the city. The catch is that first you must find the station. Take the airport shuttle to Terminal 2, negotiate a series of escalators and moving walkways, and about 10 minutes later you will reach the station.

Here, your problems are only just beginning. Either ask the attendant for a token, or solve your transportation problems for the next two days by feeding \$13.50 (change machines are available) into the Transit Card machines. This will give you enough for 10 single journeys, and allow you to take transfers on buses for 30 cents each.

Do your best to persuade the attendant to give you the CTA map, which will be a trusty companion all weekend - and is the only map you need. Sit back and enjoy the 40-minute ride into town.

Once there, orientation is easy. Almost all streets run north-south or east-west, with few difficult diagonals. The main north-south roads are Michigan Avenue and State Street. The latter slices through the Loop, a rectangle covering about a square mile, defined by the elevated subway lines. (This sounds convoluted, but makes perfect sense when you see a map, honest.) Being inside or outside the Loop is an important concept to the average Chicagoan.

You will, if you follow this plan approximately, spend most of your time within or close to the Loop. Before you head significantly south of it, take local advice on safety.

Check in

Being a sensible traveller, you will have booked in advance. The McCormick convention centre has just been expanded to become the biggest in the world, which means that Chicago is often booked out with delegates. The demand for rooms means the prices quoted here can fluctuate significantly. Mid-range: Days Inn, Lincoln Park (001 773 525 7010) charges around \$70 (£45) including breakfast. Luxury: the Inter-Continental on North Michigan Avenue (001 312 944 8895) has winter weekend specials for as little as \$89 (£57) including tax.

Take a ride

The best way to get an instant understanding of the astonishing scale of Chicago is to take that Loop in full. Orange Line trains loop around it clockwise, Brown Line trains anticlockwise. On a terrain that is as flat as an untopped pizza, Chicago has created its own landscape, one that is best viewed 30ft up from a swaying train.

Take a hike

If you alight at Adams, you will be a block away from the Chicago Architecture Foundation. This commendable organisation, located on the ground floor of the Railway Exchange building at

the corner of Michigan and Jackson, runs a daily tour at 10am. For \$10, you spend two hours in the company of a well-informed guide who will trace the history of a city built upon unadulterated exaggeration.

Lunch on the run

At eight blocks to the mile (north-south; 12 to the mile east-west), it's a two-mile hike up Michigan Avenue to Water Tower Place. Worth the walk, though, for an unparalleled series of shops.

When you get to Water Tower Place, you find even more. Indeed, the glass elevator to the seventh floor is an excellent appetiser for your lunch. Many other cities have thought of food courts, but Foodlife - on the mezzanine floor - is different. Where else can you pile up your plate with antipasti, salad or hot dishes for \$4.95 per pound?

Cultural afternoon

Conventional wisdom has it that the best gallery in Chicago is the handsome old Art Institute. But the new Museum of Contemporary Art has a couple of advantages. One is that it is only 200 yards from your table at Foodlife. The other is that the building and collection celebrate space and assertion in a manner shared by the city itself.

From the outside, it looks wantonly grubby. Inside, the sharp angles and wide windows provide a startling venue for a challenging collection. Between now and 25 January, the fuzzy frontier between art and film is explored - highly appropriate in the most cinegeic of cities, whose latest cameo is in *My Best Friend's Wedding*. The museum opens 10am-6pm at weekends, from 11am on other days except on Monday, when it is closed.

Window shopping

From today, the windows of Marshall Fields department store in State Street become hilariously festive, arresting passers-by who then trigger massive, good-natured congestion in Chicago's main street. You can happily venture inside because of the general rule that prices in the United States are the same as in Britain - except that theirs are in dollars, as opposed to ours in pounds.

An aperitif

Nearby, the Berghof at 17 West Adams Street is a German hickkeller which also manages to be the archetypally American bar, complete with attentive service, good beer (local brews are rapidly gaining ascendancy from the mass-produced fizz from up the highway in Milwaukee) and staff who expect their tips to be as handsome as they are.

Demure dinner

Pizzeria Uno (29 East Ohio Street) is, it says, the original source of the Chicago deep-dish pizza. Many say it is still the greatest. Mine was the size of a small Midwestern town, and so tasty that I had the remains boxed up and munched them on the plane home. You may, however, need to queue for as long as an hour.

Sunday morning: go to church

Westminster Abbey? Notre Dame? You can see bits of both at the skyscraper-Gothic Chicago Tribune tower on Michigan Avenue. This cathedral to journalism is decorated by pilfered masonry from celebrated and newsworthy structures around the world, from the Parthenon to the Berlin Wall. Inside, inspirational motifs evangelise about newspapers.

Bracing brunch

The only place in town for real Chicagoans is Lou Mitchell's, the archetypal diner hideo around the back of Union Station at Jackson and Jefferson. You will be given a doughnut when you arrive, then treated to a mountain of French toast, million-egg omelettes and endless coffee, in chrome and cheerful surroundings.

A walk in the park

... may not be possible after a bout like that. But try to join the locals on the communal stroll through Grant Park, the verdant barrier between the city and the lake-that-thinks-it-is-an-ocean, Michigan.

The icing on the cake

The 100-year-old public library at Randolph and Michigan has been brilliantly transformed into a people's palace. The Chicago Cultural Centre opens at noon on Sundays, until 5pm, and allows you to roam around four floors heavy with civic pride. The Dome Memorial Hall at the top shows that intricacy and sensitivity offer as strong an architectural suit as sheer scale, while the Corner Bakery on the ground floor is the place to fill any remaining gaps in your appetite.

RED CHANNEL

Hazards facing today's traveller on the railways of South America, as advised by the Thomas Cook Overseas Timetable.

The provinces of Argentina continue to bicker on about passenger trains, but their reluctance to pay for them is keeping the system very small. The gap in service on the southern main line remains, where it crosses La Pampa, but the

long-expected service from Buenos Aires north to Tucuman, which has been stopped by Tucuman's unwillingness to contribute any cash, may finally be starting. Tucuman has subcontracted service to an operator that thinks it may be able to make some money by offering a level of service found on few trains.

The trains themselves, old but refurbished, are fairly sumptuous, and your ticket includes the services of hostesses and private security guards. Presumably the clientele is expected to

consist largely of rich, libidinous men, but, if they can make it pay, perhaps it will lead the way to unexpected pleasures on trains everywhere.

We, and many others, have been predicting the end of rail service in Ecuador for at least five years, but the system staggers on, still calling itself the State Railway, though the government has washed its hands of the operation. Yet again it has produced a schedule of train services. We include it as "advertised", but would warn that a

traveller who was there only seven days after the new timings were introduced found that both the railcars (they have only two) were out of service.

The Ferrocarril Arica-La Paz has been sold to the Cruz Blanca Investment Co, whose policy is not to open passenger services. The last of the routes offering rail service up into the Andes has thus been closed to passengers.

Thomas Cook Overseas Timetable, £8.40

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RH/PL

Writer's block in Ecuador

You don't have to travel hard or fast to appreciate the great variety of the tiny Andean nation of Ecuador. Richard Colbey took a route to the heart of the country.

It would only be a slight over-simplification of the traveller's geography of Ecuador to say that east of the capital, Quito, is jungle; to the north are the old towns of Otavalo and Ibarra with teeming Indian markets; head west and you reach beaches; and in the south are mountain ranges. Yet many of the country's visitors overlook all of these compass points and go only to its greatest attraction, the Galapagos Islands.

By South American standards Ecuador is compact and safe, with a good transport network. Indeed this is one of the most friendly and inexpensive places in the continent. Quito's altitude of nearly 10,000 feet can be a shock to those who arrive by air from lower-lying European countries. (For that reason many pre-booked Galapagos packages use larger, industrialised but coastal Guayaquil as their mainland base.)

You don't have to be an architecture buff to appreciate the capital's old town, with its Plaza de la Independencia surrounded by archetypal colonial buildings. We found a day's gentle walking around splendid churches, monasteries and old government buildings the ideal way to acclimatise before exposing ourselves to the rigour of the country's provinces.

Rigour, though, is a slightly harsh word for Baños. Three hours (normally) by bus from Quito, the town may be where the jungle begins, but it attracts visitors more for its thermal baths. The curative properties may be questionable, but there is no shortage of

opportunities, private and public, hot and cold, for those who wish to take to the waters. Indeed, the bigger hotels all boast private spas. Those who can tear themselves away from these comforts will find a vast array of trips that can be taken on foot or by four-wheel drive into the jungle.

The gentlest introduction to the jungle is the 30 miles of road to Puyo, which is well enough paved to make cycling feasible. On a map the route seems all the more attractive because Baños is more than 1,000ft higher than Puyo. Sadly, that doesn't translate into a consistent downwards slope. There seem to be just as many ups as downs. However, the less than fully fit will be consoled by the many buses that pass along the route. They think nothing of stopping in the middle of nowhere for sweaty gringos, taking the equivalent of a few pennies, putting the bikes on the roof, and dropping the foreigners off again a few miles up the road when they have got their breath back.

Whether viewed from bike or bus, the route offers a stunning first sight of the Amazon, following the tributary, Rio Pastaza. Across the river from the road is the seemingly impenetrable greenery; east to the road, the hills bear down with almost cliff-like steepness.

We enjoyed our time in the Amazon so much that we delayed our return to Quito until the day before our flight home. And then we found that we were almost unable to leave.

On the road between Baños and the country's main Pan-American highway we encountered one of the hazards of South American travel: the roadblock. In Ecuador, not a country where the police or army are particularly prominent, these are likely to be citizens' protests. This, so far as we could gather, was a demonstration against land "reforms" imposed by the government. The

protesters had completely blocked the road with rocks and boulders, and were allowing no one to pass by vehicle or on foot. We were the only foreigners on our bus, and, as far as we could tell, anywhere in the locality. All the local people were respecting the roadblock. Although we could not entirely understand what was going on, this appeared to be as much out of unity as any intimidation by the protesters.

Who were we to say that many of the locals did not have as great a need to be somewhere the other side of the roadblock as we did? Nonetheless, we were conscious of the fact that foreigners do tend to be given special treatment, particularly in poor countries that have not yet become overrun by tourists. Remembering everything I had ever been told about non-confrontational body language, I went to the man who appeared to be in charge of the pickets, and told him in broken Spanish that I was a socialist journalist - two half-truths - and asked if he would explain about the protest. He did so in more detail than I could have absorbed in English, let alone Spanish. The gist of it seemed to be that controls being introduced would make it impossible for subsistence farmers to continue, and that they would become absorbed into large estates. However, had my Spanish, though, there was no misunderstanding that these were poor people expressing an economic grievance in a forceful yet civilised way with the support of the population around them.

By the time we had finished talking there was no question of our being prevented from getting through to the highway. We thanked the protesters and made what I feared were hollow promises to publicise their cause. We made it to Quito in time for our flight, and I hope that telling *Independent* readers about that protest goes some way to fulfilling my promise to the pickets.

HIGH ROAD

Suppose you want to get from Paddington Station in London to Darkest Peru (defined as the city of Iquitos in the Amazon region of the country). The smart way is to take the complimentary limousine that Virgin Atlantic offers Upper Class passengers, to take you to Heathrow Terminal Three for the flight to Miami. You should have four hours in the Florida city (best spent at the fancy shops of Coral Gables, 10 minutes from the airport), before taking your premium business-class seat on Faucett Peruvian's weekly non-stop to Iquitos. Virgin quotes a round-trip fare of £4,088.

LOW ROAD

The stingy person's fast track from Paddington to Heathrow Airport involves a train to Hayes and Harlington, transferring to bus M40 to the airport. The Colombian airline, Avianca (0990 76747), opened up low-cost air routes from Britain to the west of South America earlier this year. To increase business, it is currently offering an excellent deal to any Colombian city - including Leticia, on the Amazon - for £442 all in. You may reasonably observe that this is not quite the same location as Iquitos, but you should be able to reach it from Leticia by taking an occasional boat upstream.

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Blue Sky Appeal
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Independent and Independent on Sunday readers
took over 2.3 million holidays last year, with at least one of them being in the UK.

Source: TGI 1997

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5/SOUTH AMERICA

for

Mixing with the salt of the earth



High season(ing): the Salt Hotel at Salar de Uyuni, where the local resource is extensively used to bizarre effect

Photograph Massimo Bardi/Bruce Coleman Limited

The desert lands of south-west Bolivia are remote and unearthly. Kerry McKibbin spent five days in a surreal landscape.

"Five hundred dollars and food not included? You want us to starve to death in the desert? Think of my mother, I beg of you," said the Israeli tourist.

For a good hour I had been convinced that I was the only tourist in town. Certainly, I had been the only traveller among the old men gathered at the main square, exchanging the evening's gossip under a watery sunset. As I'd ventured up the Avenida Ferroviaria, a bowler-hatted woman had stridden ahead of me, her coca-leaf wares wrapped in a pink woven shawl, and her child waddling behind, tightly padded against the intense cold, his arm stretching up to hold the end of his mother's plait. Both were dwarfed by the statue of an armed railway worker which dominated the main street of Uyuni, the last outpost on the edge of the Bolivian desert, and the main

base from which desert expeditions begin. Survival on such journeys requires two things: endurable companions and a driver with a compass in his head. As a solo traveller, I was on the lookout for both.

As I entered the tourist office, the other foreigner was bargaining hard: "OK. Three hundred dollars - but I'll find five more people." His eyes lit up as he saw me. "Four more people." One more Israeli, a Swiss and a French couple later, we'd secured a five-day round trip. A teachers' strike also provided us with Quintin, who, instead of delivering lessons on natural science, became our driver.

Early the next day, with pan-pipe music blaring, our four-wheel drive vehicle headed towards an intriguing strip of white salt that glimmered in the distance. We exchanged the usual introductory stories of tropical diseases suffered, while the desert crept upon us unexpectedly. Suddenly the vehicle skidded. We were driving across the flats of Salar de Uyuni. A blinding white sheet of tightly packed salt crystals, forming interlocking, octagonal tiles,

stretched from one horizon to another. Only a faint, brown track where the salt crust had been worn by previous Jeep tyres indicated human intrusion. We were surprised, therefore, to encounter a commuter.

In front of us, a boy wearing a balacava and sunglasses shovelled salt on to a pile, licking his finger and marking it with his initials. Quintin waved in recognition. The boy was one of the salt farmers who cycle daily from Colchani to work the 10 billion tonnes of salt for export to Brazil.

Apart from such commuters, the edge of the Salar boasted an hotel, also made of salt blocks. Here, guests sat on salt chairs around salt tables, admiring salt ornaments which already included a Christmas tree complete with baubles. Stopping for lunch, we played table football, trying to reassure ourselves that this was still the same planet we'd been inhabiting that morning. But the faraway Isla de Pescadores with its carpet of cacti continued to shimmer and float on the midday heat haze.

Back on the track, Jeeps from competing companies accelerated past us,

throwing up clouds of dirt which coated my tongue with red, metallic-tasting dust. Brown, sloping hills rhythmically rose and fell to pan pipes while the French couple began to complain that the Swiss traveller's one cassette, *Musica de los Andes*, was becoming wearing.

Occasionally we would encounter sculptured erratics, desert versions of twisted, wind-blown trees. Small lakes would appear ahead, and rare James flamingos with shocking-pink wings took flight at the sound of our engine.

That evening, in the village of San Juan, I crept down the main dirt track to the church, my footsteps startlingly loud. No trees wave their branches here. No traffic passes. No birds sing. Uniting the chicken wire at the gate, I passed graves with wooden crosses. Some were decorated with flowers; not all were named. Like the surrounding dwellings, the thatched church was made of adobe bricks. Its tower, no higher than 12ft, supported two pottery vases and a crucifix. From behind me the sun cast an orange light, and the purple shades

in the crevices of the mountains increased with the fading light. The church door was slightly ajar and in the beam of my torch I picked out a sack of skulls. Next to it was another containing leg bones; another with arms and spines. A distant cry intruded as women herded their llamas into stone pens, pulling their shawls tight as the sun finally went down.

Back at our communal room, the Swiss boy, suffering altitude sickness, had stuffed his mouth with coca leaves. Meanwhile the Israelis investigated the outhouses, and reported a lack of showers. At least we were to be saved the nightly terror which accompanies electrically-heated (and badly wired) Bolivian showers. In the darkness of the room, pan-pipe music played softly. "For God's sake!" came exasperated French hisses. I could see my breath in the moonlight. It was minus 20 degrees outside.

The desert defied my senses. Mirages held inverted reflections of hills; lagoons changed their colour as the winds blew. Laguna Colorado appeared red; Laguna Verde's grey mixed to blue and then to green

as the temperature of its minerals rose. High at the Sol de Mañana, 4,800 metres above sea level, the earth squealed scalding steam; sulphur clouds rose up, enveloping my companions whose silhouettes looked trapped against the early morning sun.

And in the midst of this wilderness, we encountered blasted check-points - one of them a camouflaged military camp where the Bolivian flag fluttered madly in the wind and two soldiers, who looked about 16, stood around in tattered uniforms. They allowed the Israelis, who had just finished their military service, to check out their rifles before receiving an angry dressing-down from their commander for handing over their weapons. Meekly, they checked our passports, lifted the road barrier and, returning to the jeep window, asked whether we had any sweets.

After five days and 870 kilometres, we returned in darkness to Uyuni. The town, we agreed, looked almost welcoming, and the prospect of a hot meal at El Rosedal was positively luxurious. As we ordered, Edith Piaf was playing in the background.

Postcard from Paraguay

For an intriguing combination of nostalgia and adventure, there's nowhere quite like Paraguay, writes Robert del Quiaro.

Central post offices in the capitals of Latin America were built to impress people for whom the writing of a letter or a telegram was an event of much contemplation and the sending of it a wrestling match with a sinewy arm of the state. Tall doors would revolve to admit pensioners, office boys and girls, and travellers, who all trudged over mosaics for many metres. Lately, though, cuts and shortages have slackened the states' biceps. Doors squeak and stick, brass is sneaky, positions are attended only by a few distracted clerks among tense cards - cerrado, fechado, fermé - closed, in any language.

Not so in Paraguay. There, a habitual make-do grandeur and lack of cash meant that the capital's post office was improvised in an old townhouse of a single storey. Asunción still has this delightful amenity. In rooms off all four sides of the central courtyard, packages are weighed where the mistress of the house used to chivy the laundry women about the starch in the collars, customs declarations are handed over where the master drank his bitter tea and read the paper; inkpads and sealing wax are stored where the children kept their rocking-horses and dolls' houses.

Customers stand at writing-desks in the covered patio, with their backs to the luxuriant central garden. When inspiration fails and you turn away from the pallid stationery, rich colours of the subtropics refresh the mind, and it's as though some wild and innocent tongue might at any moment

chirrup a prompt from among the leaves and flowers, and even protrude to lick your stamps.

Asunción is a low-built city laid out as a grid, always offering glimpses of green - plants hanging from house walls, lush banks of the rivers that meet nearby. The language you hear people speaking here sounds more like Chinese than anything European. Guaraní was spoken - but not written - long before the Spaniards arrived. It's widely used by Paraguayans, whether they have indigenous blood or not, and the Paraguayan currency, out of extra respect, is the guaraní.

To see how the country used to live - and continues to live now - get out of the city and visit the remains of Jesuit missions. They ran the region as a theocratic colony for more than a century until the Spanish empire expelled it in 1767. Then spend time on an estancia (cattle ranch). The tourist bureau in Asunción can arrange that - expect old-fashioned, macho-type encounters amid grand horizons, strong wrists, long whips, supple horses and sizzling steaks. Vegetarians do not thrive here.

Up the River Paraguay, when it's not in flood, there are boat trips to Concepción, half-way across the country, and even as far as Corumbá on the frontier of Brazil and Bolivia.

That's at the edge of the Pantanal, one of the greatest expanses of wetland left on the planet, with wildlife galore, mob-handed mosquitoes and slow to-ing and fro-ing in mist and sunlight of herds of long-horned cattle - a kind of Chisholm Trail up to its knees in water. Watch out for the African crocodiles that some fool of an entrepreneur has started to breed farther down the rivers. A close encounter here... well, that would be something to write home about.

SOUTH AMERICAN DEPARTURES

Getting there

In the past year the traveller to South America has suffered two bouts of bad news. The first was when the Venezuelan airline Viasa collapsed, removing one of the best budget bets to most South American destinations. The next was the imposition of higher taxes on travellers by the US government, making America a much more expensive proposition for connecting flights.

The good news is that the arrival of two "new" airlines, Avianca of Colombia, and Transbrasil, means more choice and lower fares. British Airways, Iberia of Spain and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines have responded by offering some good prices on specific flights. The best deals are likely to be to Buenos Aires, Rio and São Paulo.

To reach the destinations featured on these pages, try the following: Heathrow to La Paz, Bolivia, on Avianca via Bogotá; one of numerous UK airports to Quito, Ecuador, on KLM via Amsterdam; Heathrow to Asunción, Paraguay on Viasa, via Rio.

South American specialist agencies know their way through the Amazonian jungle of air fares; Independent writers have received good service from Journey Latin America (0181-747 3108), South American Experience (0171-976 5511) and Steamond (0171-730 8646).

Getting in

Visas are no longer required for short visits by British passport holders to any South American nation. Immigration officials may, however, request evidence of an air ticket out of the country, and sufficient funds.

Getting around

To see plenty of South America (or, at any rate, its airports), the Golden Air pass enables you to visit five South American cities for a total of \$1,045 (£618 at yesterday's rate). To qualify, you must fly to the Colombian capital, Bogotá, on the national airline Avianca (090 767747). You



can then choose from a range of places, including Quito, Lima, La Paz, Buenos Aires, Santiago and Rio.

The main form of surface transport in South America is the bus. The term covers a multitude of vehicles, from smooth, air-conditioned coaches to converted trucks (or even unconverted trucks). The ejecutivo services on the highways of Brazil, Argentina and Chile are fast and comfortable. At the other extreme, you may find yourself clinging to the back of a lorry that is lurching precariously between mudholes in rural Bolivia. The Thomas Cook Overseas

Timetable gives an indication of frequencies on main routes, but the precise schedules change often. The timetable also details the depleted network of railways in South America (see Red Channel, page 3).

Driving is only for the fearless, bearing in mind the imaginative motoring techniques employed by the locals. Venezuela has one of the highest rates of road deaths in the world.

Health

Except in parts of the south of the continent, take precautions against malaria, hepatitis and yellow fever. Beyond this, it would be foolish to generalise about the risks in a continent that includes, *inter alia*, some of the driest and wettest locations in the world, and has huge variations in wealth. Consult your GP or a travel medicine specialist such as Masta (0891 224100) for advice about specific destinations.

Money

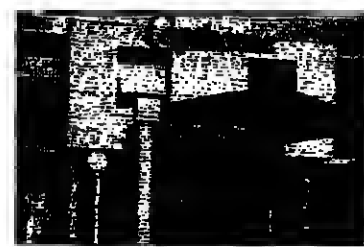
Pounds - either travellers' cheques or cash - are hard to exchange in South America. US dollars are the preferred currency, and a reserve of \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills can help temporary shortages of local currency. Since rapid devaluation is the norm for many South American currencies, obtain only a little at a time.

Living costs

You can live very cheaply in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. A good dinner may cost £5, a night in a comfortable hotel £10. Life is cheaper if you stay in places busy with insect life. Argentina, Brazil and Chile are as expensive as most European destinations.

THE INDEPENDENT

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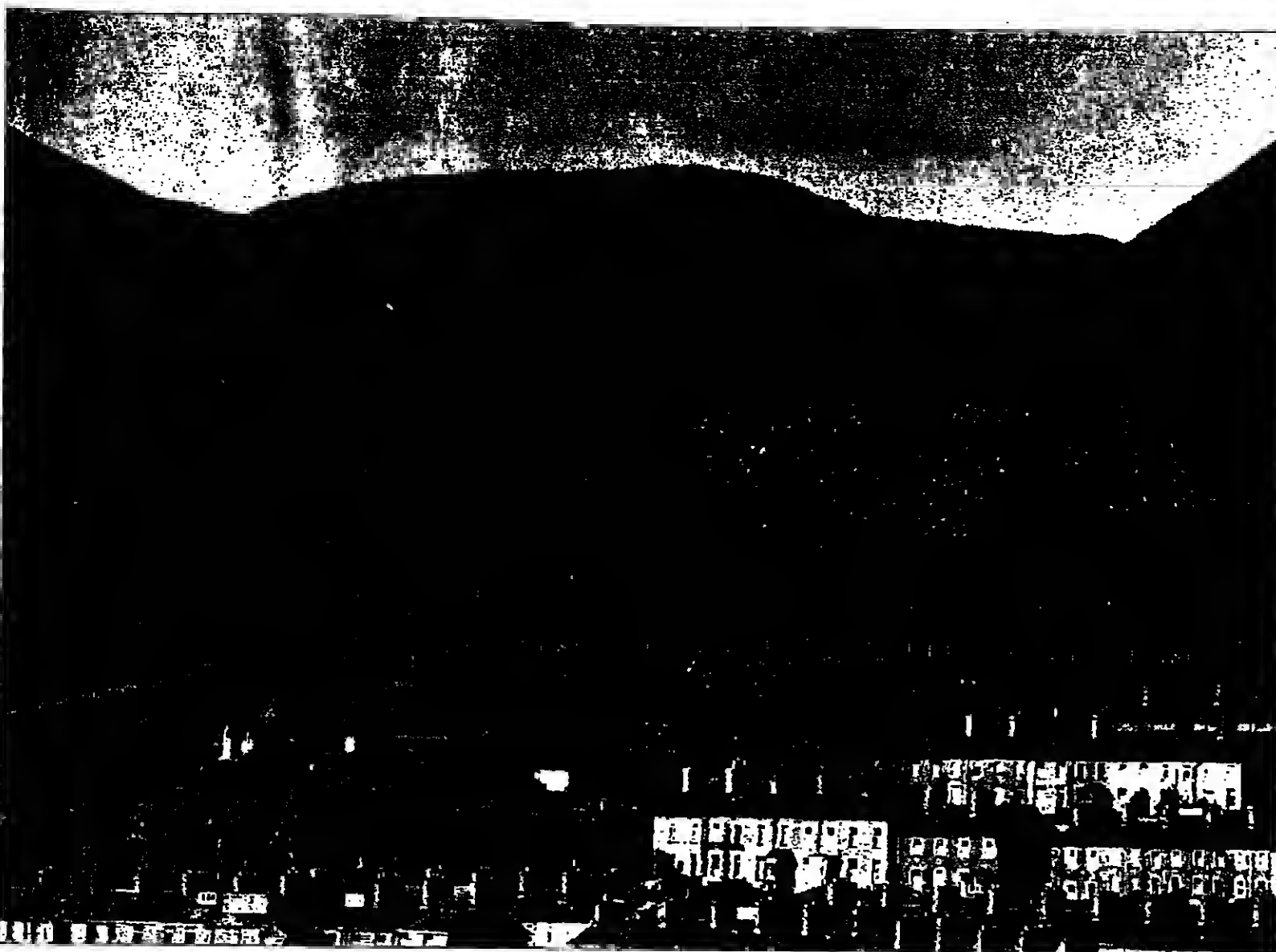
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Call cost 50p per minute to all lines. Winner picked at random after 23 November 1997. Usual Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

6/BITAIN



Roofing of the world: before the war, Blaenau sent slate to the four corners of the earth. Below, the Conwy Valley line

Photograph: MSI

Clean slate for a Welsh steam train

Once the slate capital of the western world, the challengingly named Blaenau Ffestiniog now offers a strangely beautiful setting for a Welsh weekend, writes Heather Payton.

It was going to be a lovely evening—a rare thing, we'd been led to believe, in this wild north west of Wales. Just half-an-hour earlier, we'd arrived in the dark, and walked the 50 yards to the hotel. Now the sky was dappled above us, the clouds luminous in the moonlight as we enjoyed our pre-dinner stroll, much better than the southern English fog we'd left behind. Wales 1, England nil.

"Hang on," said my husband, who is a Welshman, so he's allowed to cast doubt. "It's a bloody great cliff."

It was. A 200-ft vertical mountain of slate, glistening wetly, towered over a small parade of shops. This was Blaenau Ffestiniog, former slate capital of the western world.

It had all started on a perfect summer's day as we watched a tiny train scoot along, apparently inches from the sea from our vantage point half-way up a Welsh hill. Trains could be nice, after all. So here we were on a damp November evening, six trains and nine-and-a-half journey hours into a marathon three-day anticlockwise circuit of Wales. Just the birthday present for the Welshman who has everything. Paddington, Cardiff, Crewe, Chester, Llandudno Junction, Betws-y-Coed. Tomorrow and the day after, the Ffestiniog narrow gauge to Porthmadog, glottal-twisting Machynlleth, Llanwrtyd, Llandellio and Llanelli, before Swansea and home. Phew.

Before the war, Blaenau sent its slate, via the little railway, to the four corners of the earth, roofing the world from what feels like the roof of the world. Conditions for the underground workers were appalling, but the English mine-owners made profits until eventually cheaper Spanish slate overwhelmed them. By the Fifties many of the mines had closed; the last time the remainder made money was in the Sixties. Now, apart from two remaining mines, Blaenau's slate stays in the ground, the population has shrunk from 15,000 to 5,000, and the Welsh-speaking local kids hang out by the bus shelter to the occasional sound of breaking glass.

But it does have an extraordinary sort of beauty, in a decaying industrial sort of way. The High Street is fighting back with a cluster of smart fascias and the newly renovated (and pricey) Queen's Hotel. Eighteen months ago it was derelict. The new owners hope that its rebirth, at a cost of £450,000, is one symbol for the town. Another is its newly-discovered role as the film-makers' darling. *White Knight*, with Richard Gere, was shot nearby, 60 years after its debut as the site of the first-ever Welsh language movie, and the area is currently providing the backdrop for a television re-make of *Merlin*. Don't feel too sorry for Blaenau.

In daylight, the dominance of the shiny slate is more obvious. What on earth does it do to the psyche, to grow up under towering, dripping monuments to industrial failure? Or to play rugby in the shadow of a gigantic slag heap?

We opted for a morning walk up the hill to the last remaining slate mine to run tours for the visitors. The other has just been bought by McAlpine, and will concentrate on producing slate.

But although Llechwedd does tours all year, there was nothing that would give two damp tramps the time to surface and walk back in time for their train, so we had to content ourselves with a free wander through the reconstructed Victorian miners' village. Here we heard the tale of Dafydd Francis, the blind harpist who,

as an old man, told his daughter: "When the third string breaks, my time will have come." One string went, then another, and another. The harpist was soon dead. Perhaps Blaenau's three strings, having broken, are gingerly being rejoined.

As we walked back down to Blaenau, the sun struggled out, bouncing off the slate and the smoke of the little town far below.

Most of the tourists who visit Blaenau do so for the trains. The Conwy Valley line from the north follows the river, wide and silver to start with, against golden trees. The train, carrying its mixture of backpackers and flat-capped Welsh-speaking farmers, rumbles through forests past the oddly Germanic Betws-y-Coed. The mountains are all around; as everyone knows, Wales would be far bigger than England, if only it could be ironed out.

Yet it's the steam-drawn Ffestiniog Railway that really brings them in. In its early days after 1836, it carried its wagons full of slate down the 13-mile 670-ft drop to Porthmadog by gravity. The horses got a free lift down, but had to haul it back up. In later years came steam, and human passengers, but when war was declared, it came to a halt, the engines abandoned where they stood. By the Fifties, its tracks had disappeared and bits of its engines were gracing the living-rooms of souvenir hunters. It was to be another 30 years before, lovingly restored by volunteers, it would reopen.

The train arrives at Blaenau in a cloud of steam, and the driver and his mates, hats pulled down, relish their glory as they busy themselves with what all little boys want to do. The hour-long trip is stunning. The train rocks urgently past lakes, squeezes through fern-studded rock cuttings, sidles precariously along the sides of mountains, its track built up with stones, before bursting into a sunlit valley of golden trees with golden apples and golden light. You don't get this view from any road.

As we trundle through the forests we pass red-socked walkers; if you get your timing right, you can get off at one of the tiny halts with challenging oases and meet the next train further down: Tanygrisiau where a new tunnel had to be blasted through the mountain, or Ddualt and Tan-y-Bwlch, where the track loops around on itself as it spirals down the valley. Or from Minfordd there's a 15-minute walk to the Italianate village of Portmeirion, scene of the cult TV series, *The Prisoner*.

Eventually there are views through the mountains, growing ever larger, of the estuary where the Llyn Peninsula meets the Cambrian Coast, before a right turn takes us over a causeway to Porthmadog with *Scooby-Doo* rearing up behind it. A museum at the station's tea rooms tells of the railway's reincarnation, but for us it was the 10-minute walk to the mainline station, and on with the journey south.

Remarkably, it all fitted together. Eleven different trains, nearly all on time. 18 hours of travel. The planning took nearly as long. It would probably have been quicker by road, but not nearly as pretty. Would I do it again? Well... the Ffestiniog Railway breaks its winter slumber between Christmas and New Year, so if I have a few days off I'll be on my way. It is bound to look completely different clockwise.

For more details of the Ffestiniog Railway, call 01766 512340 or go to www.festiniog.co.uk on the Internet. For train timetables, call 0345 484950 or consult railtrack.co.uk. The Freedom of Wales Flexi-Pass offers eight days' rail travel over 15 days for £57 until 4 January.

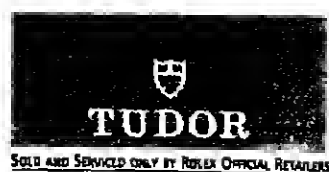
Heather Payton paid £70 for a huge double room at the Queen's Hotel, Blaenau Ffestiniog (01766 830055). Llechwedd Slate Caverns: 01766 830306.



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7/BITAIN

THE INDEPENDENT
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7



Rocks of ages

In the north are savage peaks, to the south gently rolling lowlands. The Isle of Arran is Scotland in miniature – and a British gem, writes Graham Hoyland.

The odd thing about islands is that you keep going back to them. I was conceived on the Isle of Arran, and I suppose I will keep returning until I die. Our family decamped there every summer holiday, coming up from England to stay with my grandmother. We didn't live in the Front House, her solid sandstone terrace house in Brodick, but squatted in the Back, a tiny, two-room cottage with wooden cabins behind it in another, recessive Back. Grandmother came too. From here, in an atmosphere of paraffin lamps and the smell of damp, come my oldest memories of Arran.

The reason for my grandmother's seasonal move was to make room for the Folk. Nearly

everyone in Arran seemed to let their houses to the holiday-makers from Glasgow. Standing in the Firth of Clyde has truly made Arran "Scotland's holiday island", but somehow its very popularity blinds people to the fact that this is one of the real gems of the British Isles.

Robert Burd seemed blind to Arran, too. He must have seen the Arran hills from the inland Ayrshire farms where he spent his youth, but he fails to mention the island in his writings. This seems unaccountable; as you arrive at the dismal town of Ardrossan to catch the ferry you cannot fail to be impressed by the view across 14 miles of sea – if it's not raining. Then you may just see a dirty grey smudge. But on a clear day, Arran floats there in all her glory.

At once you can see why the island claims to be a Scotland in miniature. In the north, savage peaks jag against the sky, their flanks streaked with white burns. In the middle the glens dip down to Brodick, the main village, and to the south are the

softly rolling lowlands, interrupted by the shape of Holy Isle.

You can take your car or to the ferry, or, better still, your bike. As the ferry approaches Brodick Bay on the eastern side of the island you may see measured mile markers further up the coast. The Clyde-built liners used to time their trials speed against them; this stretch of water is where they first stretched their sea-legs.

Arran is immeasurably ancient; it was an island before the mainland of Britain parted company with Europe. We know this because its spectacular physical structure was the battleground of the early geologists, the Neptunists versus the Plutonists. The views of the latter prevailed: it is now believed that the northern granite peaks were the result of an upwelling of molten material from the Earth's interior, since eroded by time – and the hammers of generations of geology students, who have come every summer to chip away at the 500-million-year-old bones of the island.

As the ferry ties up alongside Brodick pier you can see that the coast road goes in two directions – of course, it's circular. It's 56 miles round the island, and it can be cycled in a day. It's also a great way to see Arran. If you go northabout you do the difficult bits first. You pedal through Brodick, around the broad bay named by the Vikings, perhaps gazing up at Goatfell, the highest mountain of the island. Just under 3,000ft, it's not big enough to qualify for the Munro system, which suggests that only mountains over that height are worth climbing. This serves to point out the absurdity of a system based on size.

Arran's mountains are some of the finest in the world, being finely shaped, accessible in a day and surrounded by sea. Across the bay, beneath Goatfell, is Brodick Castle, a red sandstone symbol of the power of the feudal system, repeatedly sacked and rebuilt. A study of its blood-soaked history leaves you feeling rather grateful for living in our own age.

One of the absentee landlords, the 12th Duke of Hamilton, preferred to carouse in Nice with his expensive mistress, Amelia Gioia, on an income of £140,000 a year. Meanwhile his tenants were being thrown off the land to make room for the cost-effective black-faced sheep. Now you can enjoy tea while admiring the castle gardens, which have fine rhododendrons.

Peddalling up the coast, you pass through Corrie, reckoned by Asquith to be the prettiest village in Europe, and home to the founder of the publishing Macmillans. For one bizarre moment you double-take, and then realise that the bollards of the tiny harbour are painted to look like sheep. Black-faced sheep. Looking left as you pass through Sannox you can see right up Glen Sannox to Cir Mhor, a dramatic mountain view. It's a struggle up and over the Boguile, where the road leaves the coast and takes to the hills, but behind you'll see a great jagged ridge, with the terrible Witch's Leap.

"Arran of the many stags," declaimed a Gaelic poet at this time of year you may see a stag rendered black and frightening by wallowing in the peat bogs. Then it's a long, winding free-wheel into Lochranza with its grim castle, and views of the Mull of Kintyre.

Now the road turns south

along the flat shoreline of the west coast. Remote and sparsely populated, this side of the island feels Hebridean. Past a row of white cottages at Catacol, wonderfully named the Twelve Apostles, and past the guest house still run by members of my family. Up the glee is to be found a species of service tree unique to Arran. I remember going on an exhausting expedition up there with my father to find one, while my mother – another native of the island – found a tree by the road after a leisurely lunch.

It's easy pedalling on this side of Arran; your tyres sing as you cycle on the polished Tarmac and it can feel surprisingly lonely. The sky seems huge; the oystercatchers whistle along the shore. Nothing much has changed here for thousands of years, and the great stone circles at Mechie remind you of the ancient owners of this land.

The names slip by: Torbeg, Drumadoun and Sliderry Water. Suddenly you find yourself in a tropical rain-forest. Appropriately, Lagg is at the southern end of the island; the palm trees and lush undergrowth are an indication of the warmth of the Gulf Stream that washes around the island. Tea at the hotel here is timely, as now you are returning northwards.

In Whiting Bay you will pass the Burlington Guest House, where I had the best meal I've ever had on the island. Now Holy Isle is coming into view in the haze, natural anchorage of Lamash bay. Saint Molaise lived here in a cave (as was fashionable in the sixth century), and for hundreds of years Holy Isle was a place of Christian pilgrimage. Now it is owned by a sect of Tibetan Buddhists who want to make the island-within-an-island a world centre for ecumenical, ecologically friendly contemplation. They have already planted 30,000 trees and have plans for a multi-million-pound retreat complex sunk into the hillside.

Abbot-Lama Yeshe Losal's cell will be at the top, reached by a winding path, and glass-fronted individual cells will cascade downwards in two tiers, one for men, one for women. Each cell echoes St Molaise's cave, but will include a lavatory and shower. The Buddhists are trying to leave their Wheel of Life to reach a finer place, but as we gasp over the hill from Lamash we have come full circle on our journey.

Now we can speed back down to Brodick pier. The northern hills look good from up here, frozen in a snapshot from their million-year lives. This is what Arran so powerfully evokes: the infinity of time. We are just shadows that flit across the land; all we can do is celebrate it.

Getting there: Most ferry services are operated from Ardrossan to Brodick by Caledonian MacBrayne (enquiries, 01475 650100; bookings, 0990 650000), with three ferries

each way each day; from Ardrossan at 9.45am, 3.15pm and 6pm, and from Brodick at 8.20am, 1.50pm and 4.40pm. The foot passenger fare is £5.35 for a five-day return. A five-day return for a regular-sized car costs £39.50. A bicycle costs £2 return.

Accommodation: Graham Hoyland's relations run the Fairhaven Guest House in Catacol (01770 830237). For other places to stay, call the tourist information office in Brodick (01770 302140).

Eerie appeal: the standing stone at Auchencar on the west coast of Arran

Photograph
Colin McPherson

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Go to Greenwich for a day out and you're almost guaranteed to lose your sense of time – there's so much to explore, writes Sarah Jewell.

Sarah: We took the Docklands Light



Greenwich: an intriguing eye-opener on the relationship between time, space and the navigation of the sea.
Photograph: Brian Harris

room of a frigate where we shot torpedoes at an enemy ship on a computer screen.

Guy: I liked the train because it went slow and fast and it felt like being in one of my racing cars that tip to the side when they go round the corners of my Scalextrix. I thought we had a very good captain of the train - but I wasn't sure how he controlled it.

I thought the Cutty Sark was very interesting, and I liked going below deck where there was a sailor who was tying all different types of sea knots with funny names like Chinese button knot and monkey's fist knot.

The thing I liked best at the Observatory was the old wooden telescope in the Oregon Room, because when I looked into it I didn't see the sky and the rain – instead I saw Pluto, the dog from Disneyland. I would like to go there at night and look through the enormous telescope and see a star being made, like we saw on the video screen. At the Maritime Museum I liked sending a Morse code message across the room to Esther in the children's gallery. I had a very good day out.

The deal
Getting there: the Docklands Light Railway runs from Bank or Tower Hill Tube to Island Gardens. Walk through the foot tunnel to Greenwich. Boat cruises from Westminster, Charing Cross or Tower piers to Greenwich pier.

Prices: The Old Royal Observatory and the National Maritime Museum (0181-858 4422) open daily 10am-5pm, adults £5.50, concessions £4.50, children £3; combined ticket includes entry to Queen's House. Cutty Sark: open daily 10am-5pm, Jan 12 noon-5pm, adults £3.50, children £2.50, family £8.50.

Other attractions: Royal Naval College, Queen's House, Greenwich Park.

Railway to Island Gardens and then walked through the leaky foot tunnel under the Thames to Greenwich pier. It was pouring with rain as we came out of the tunnel and we looked up at the glistening symmetry of the rigging and masts of the *Cutty Sark* outlined against the sky.

Launched in 1869, this delicate little ship was built to sail to China and back in the great tea races of the 1870s. After standing over the polished wooden and brass steering wheel on the main deck and fantasising that we were out on the open seas, with the rain lashing into our faces, we needed warming up.

Greenwich village is full of bars, cafés and exciting shops. We dived into the Pier Fish Restaurant where we each had some tasty cod and chips and a rather watery hot

chocolate. Then we made a beeline through the park to the Old Royal Observatory.

For anyone, like myself, with an underdeveloped sense of spatial awareness this is the place to push the buttons, play with the gadgets and get to grips with measuring the lines of longitude and latitude around the world, working out time changes between the eastern and western hemispheres. Clocks of all description are on display, from "H4" the forerunner of all precision watches, to the Accurist Millennium Countdown clock.

As we left the Old Royal Observatory the sun started to shine, and we walked down the hill across the beautifully kept lawn to the National Maritime Museum. Huge oil paintings of the battleships that fought during the First and Second World

Wars line the walls of the exhibition of 20th-century sea power. The bloodied breeches of the greatest captain of the seas, Admiral Lord Nelson, are on display in the exhibition that charts his life and loves.

Father: I thought the Docklands train was very exciting because there was no driver and it feels as though you are controlling it yourself. I liked sliding about on the decks of the *Cuny Sark* which were very wet and slippery, and looking below deck at Long John Silver's collection of lady figureheads.

In the Old Royal Observatory we played games and learnt what the time difference is between London and Los Angeles. We saw an enormous telescope that can see through the clouds at night, but I

was disappointed that we weren't allowed to look through it. We played with a machine that explained how light rays shine through different-shaped lenses. I think my class should go there, because we are learning about convex and concave lenses at the moment.

At the Maritime Museum there was a really exciting gallery for children with lots of different *gadgets and games* about people and the sea. I liked putting my hands in a huge pair of rubber gloves inside a tank and feeling how difficult it is to operate machinery under water. In the Lord Nelson exhibition there was a film about the Battle of Trafalgar that showed how Nelson got shot. In the room about 20th-century ships, the whole exhibition was shaped like a boat, and there was a pretend control

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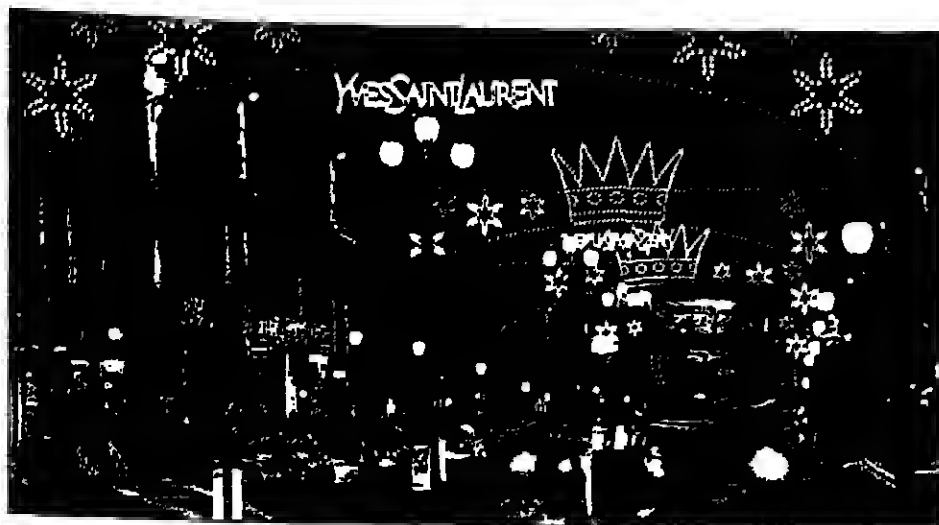
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9/CHRISTMAS



The Yves St Laurent lights: bigger and less tasteful than permitted Evening Standard

Tripping the lights fantastic

It has become the annual moan: high street Christmas lights dazzle only in their staggering tastelessness – especially those in London's West End. But as Mike Higgins found, some of our leading designers have ideas for a brighter Christmas

The sorry parade of pathetic Santas, tatty angels and garish lighthouses is a far cry from the restrained illuminations that first appeared on Oxford Street in the early Fifties.

The problem stems in part from design, and in part from underfunding. Though West End businesses consider the Christmas lights essential to attract festive shoppers, it was left to a French company, Yves St Laurent, to sponsor the Regent Street lights. Reportedly for

half the cost of the £180,000 illuminations, the fashion label was able to emblazon its logo across the lights in the heart of the West End at a bargain basement price. Last week, however, Westminster planning officers noticed that the YSL logos were 30 per cent bigger than indicated in the scheme approved by Westminster City Council.

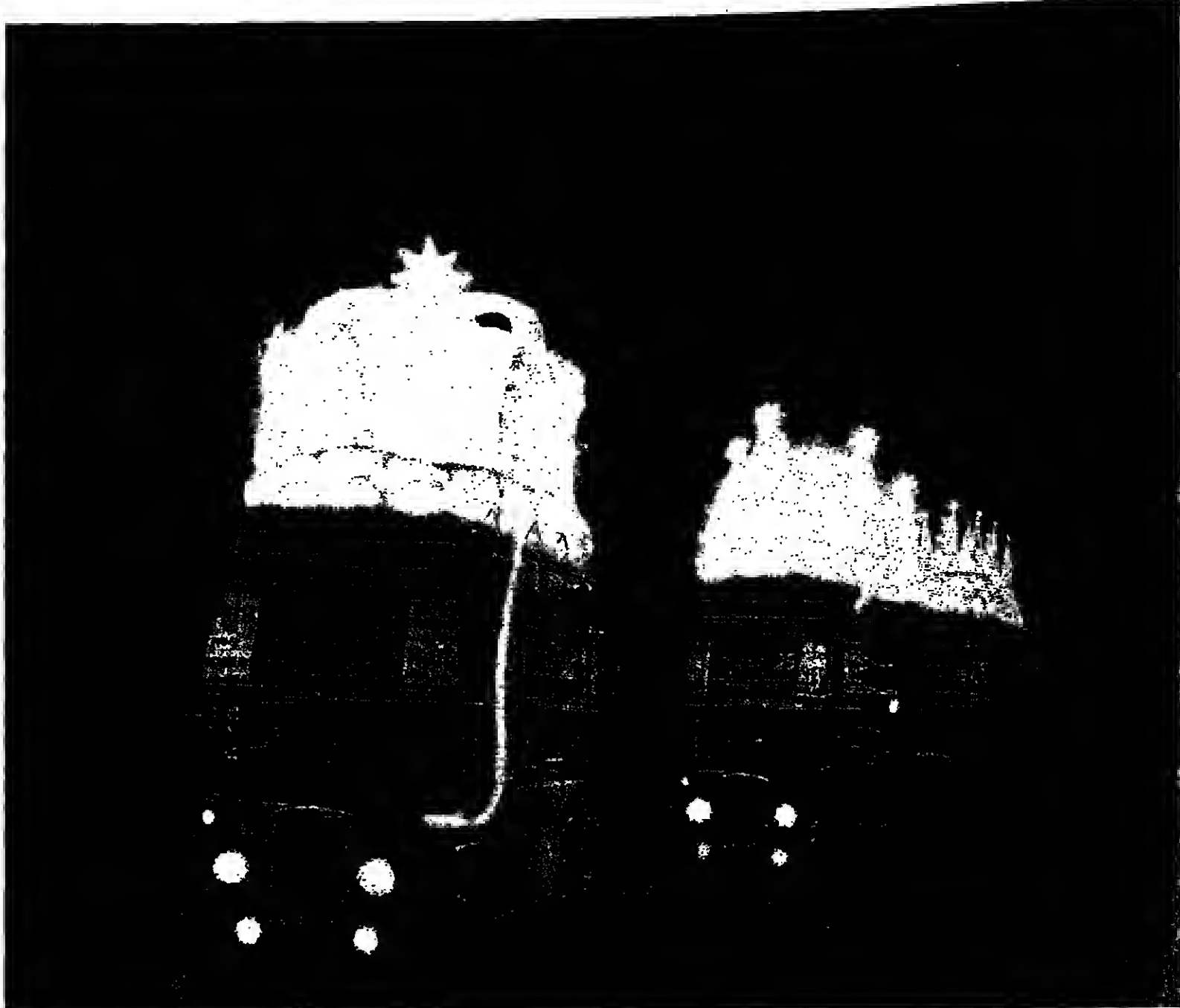
The Regent Street Association now faces prosecution unless the lights are modified. This year, however, another debate concerns the question of design. "Turned On: the RIBA Journal Campaign for Better Christmas Lights with the Museum of London" will be launched in the RIBA Journal's December issue.

As part of a feature proposing imaginative, radical new solutions, Dr Simon Thurley, director of the Museum of London, emphasises the need to reassess festive street decoration: "We have a crisis of

Christmas design. Christmas street lights in most British towns and cities are at best cheap and half-hearted, and at worst vulgar and tawdry... despite being ephemeral, [they] are street furniture, or even, as we would concede, street architecture." As John Welsh, editor of RIBA Journal, adds in his leader: "Who better to provide ideas than architects?"

Invited by the RIBA Journal to come up with ideas for illuminating a stretch of Oxford Street in any way they wished, 10 architects' practices dreamt up a challenging, witty and and delightful series of schemes to lift the festive gloom. Here are five of their suggestions.

A fuller version of this piece will appear on Monday in the 'RIBA Journal'. 'Turned On', an exhibition of the 10 schemes, is open at the Museum of London from Tuesday, 150 London Wall, EC2 (0171-600 3699), £4 (concs £2).



Richard Portchmouth, of Birds, Portchmouth & Russum: 'Three Kings'

The Regent Street lights, like most, are a bit predictable, and fail to recognise the most characteristic thing about shopping in central London – transport. We were thinking of all the shoppers carrying their pre-

sents home, and came up with a scheme that uses the inherent character of the red Routemaster buses. Everyone knows that buses, like the kings arriving in Bethlehem, always come in threes. The three kings also travelled east, and Oxford Circus is oriented east-west. "Using the exhaust of the bus, the crowns would

remain semi-inflated on their way in and out of Central London, inflating to their full capacity along Oxford Street. A myth-scented filter could be fitted to the inflatables to treat the exhaust fumes, so that the people of London get the present they really want: a bit of fresh air."



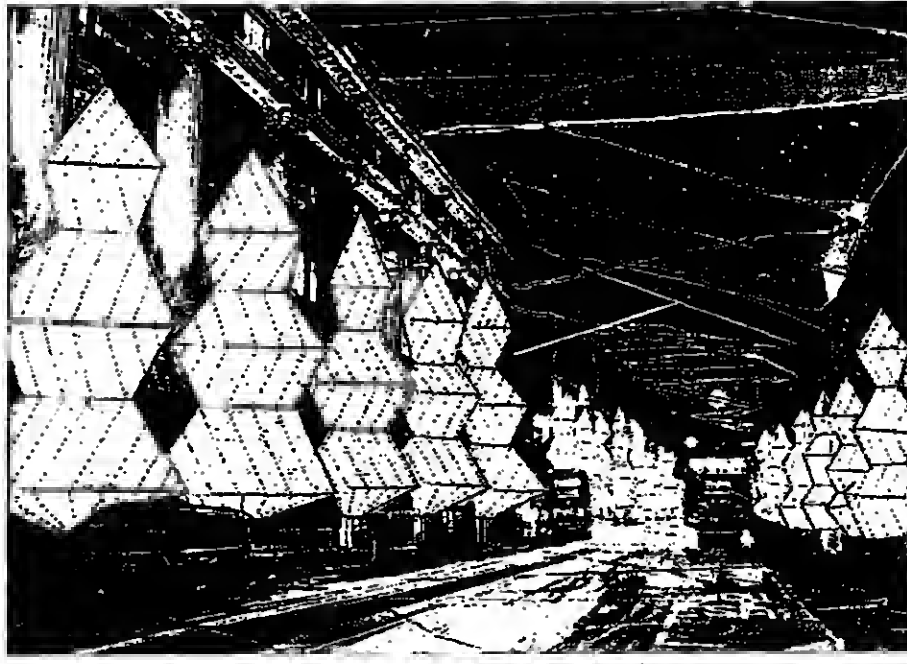
Julian Bicknell, of Julian Bicknell & Associates: 'Flying Saucers'

The Japanese are good at it, the Frooch are pretty good, but English festive lighting is lousy. The lack of imagination is a sad reflection on our planning system.

"Christmas, and therefore the lights, should appeal to kids, ultimately. If you go into Hamleys, there's movement and life everywhere, and that's primarily what our saucers – four metre helioid discs – would reflect.

"Also, people are reassessing their spiritual and religious needs with the millennium coming, so the saucers also play with the idea of life from outer space.

"Kids love mechanical things – the saucers will definitely not be high-tech. They'll be staggered as they zip up and down their cords, creating a Mexican wave effect the length of Oxford Street."



Chris Dyson, of Michael Wilford & Partners: 'Jack Frost's Christmas Promenade'

"At Christmas, shoppers want the season's drama established, and the Regent Street lights, though quite bold, could be vastly improved.

"The idea for our Christmas promenade is that Jack Frost has turned every building in Oxford Street white. "The illuminated net suspended over the street and the Brancusi-like, lit-up trees should remind shoppers of stellar constellations, while also billowing like a Mexican wave. We want the whole effect to mimic the sense of space, light and closure found on Freemount Street in Las Vegas, and Las Ramblas in Barcelona.

"Both the net and the trees are easy to put up and take down, so the whole scheme is both practical and economical."



Danny Vaia, Nic Clear, Jonny Halifax and Ezra Holland, of General Lighting and Power: 'Disco TV Mirror Ball'

"If we could only accept that Christmas is essentially a pagan holiday, and the true way to celebrate it is in a drunken orgy of gluttony, it's not the thought that counts.

"Who takes any notice of the Christmas lights in London? There's no vision or drive – they just are. The Disco TV Mirror Ball would cost about a million quid, be about three metres in diameter, weigh several tonnes and be absurdly difficult to install, thus fulfilling all the criteria for a top art project. It would look cool swiveling over Oxford Circus, showing Christmassy porm on its TVs and projecting disco lights over the surrounding buildings. Boy band covers of Christmas carols would play at full volume. The Disco Ball would capture the exploitative naughtiness that is the modern yuletide holiday."



Alex Lifschutz, of Lifschutz Davidson with Spiers & Major: 'Northern Lights'

"Colour projectors will shine in a variety of ways on to a suspended grid of compact discs, mirrored one side and matt white the other.

"By day, the low-angle winter sun will reflect off the discs. As dusk approaches, the colour projectors will mimic the changing colours of the evening sky. When night falls, the common lighting scene will pan white light down the disc grid, creating the effect of snow gently falling.

"Every 20 minutes the lighting will go through a rapid change in colour, and advertising images could be reflected off the discs to generate revenue.

"Buses, modelled to represent gift-wrapped presents, will also be painted with near-transparent ultraviolet-reflective paint so that the presents appear to unwrap or change as they pass under UV floodlights."

WHERE YOU CAN SEE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

As retail business tends to dictate the onset of the festive season, all the Christmas illuminations in the UK's largest cities have been on for a week or two. Here is a selection of places where the neon reindeer haven't yet come out: **Cockermouth, Cumbria, 23 November** Before *Emmerdale* hunk Paul Loughran flicks the switch, the main street will be closed for an afternoon of steel bands, magicians, carol-singing and Morris dancing, presided over by Santa in his grotto (01900 823 608).

Preston, Lancashire: 27 November The Gladiator Hunter will turn on the Christmas lights in Market Square at 6pm, followed by a laser and music show (01772 203 456).

Southampton: 27 November The lights will spark up at 7pm by the Bargate Monument as part of a local radio roadshow event. Boy band Alibi will then belt out a few tunes before a short firework display at 7.30pm

signals the start of the evening's late-night festive consumerism (01703 832 077)

Cheltenham, Glos: 29 November The lights in the high street will be switched on at 6pm, but a Christmas parade of floats from Mootpelier Gardens to the Promenade starts at 5.30pm. Earlier that afternoon, shoppers will find stalls, music and a Father Christmas procession in the high street (01242 522 878).

Christchurch, Hampshire: 30 November There's a Snow Queen procession from Airfield Way in Somerford through the high street, and around 4.30pm the Christmas lights will be illuminated (01202 483 124)

Durham: 4 December The Mayor's illumination of the Christmas lights at 4pm in the Market Square will open a weekend of Christmas festivities. Throughout Saturday, the town centre will play host to carol singers, dancers, musicians and storytellers (0191 386 3050)

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11/SKIING

Slalom through the boundaries of normality

Bright lights, loud silence, Japanese pizzas: skiing in the Arctic Circle is a strange experience, writes Stephen Wood.

Unless you are very lucky or very rich, you will have travelled here via a big-city southern airport. Oslo, Stockholm or Helsinki; and they seem ordinary enough places. But fly the extra 500 miles to an arctic airport, and even before you've reclaimed your baggage you can tell that the journey has taken you through the boundaries of normality.

The first shock, of course, is the icy freshness that hits you as you leave the plane, an experience to mirror that of arriving at a summer hot-spot. The second is the bright lights and loud, loud silence. You have arrived at night, because that is as hard to avoid in the winter as daytime is in summer: yet everything is bathed in 1,000 watts of light - because in an area that's at least dark-ish from October to March, municipal lighting is powerful stuff. Add the sound-absorbing characteristics of a thick layer of snow, and the effect is like that of walking on to the set of a silent movie.

It all gets better - and stranger - in daylight, when you can see the awesome landscape, big enough to lower the sky, and feel the cryogenic effects of the climate: the defensive slowing of the metabolism, and the thickening of the blood, which together with the silence make the arctic north a great place to - well, to chill out.

Dundret, which is 40 miles inside the Arctic Circle in Sweden, adds its own local peculiarities to those big themes. Don't be surprised if you are unfamiliar with the name. Outside Scandinavia, the hill at Dundret is well known only among two groups of people: the world's best skiers, and the Japanese. Competition skiers go to Dundret because its ski area is open for six months of the year, from November to the end of April.

The Japanese go there because the previous owner of the hotel at Dundret promoted the resort heavily in Japan; because the northern lights are a big attraction; and because - so one Japanese visitor told me - they like the cold, the darkness and the

solitude, which provide such a contrast to life at home. (He added that domestic flights there are so expensive that a package tour to Scandinavia costs little more than a trip to northern Japan.) More than 12 per cent of the nights booked at Dundret's hotel are for Japanese visitors.

I went there because I couldn't wait any longer for a weekend's skiing. But, unfortunately, Dundret has had a bad season so far. The snowfall has been light, and the weather hasn't been cold enough for artificial snow-making. So although several ski teams had been phoning from Austria, the availability of only two pistes and two lifts (not including the one from the ski area back up to the hotel) had put all of them off coming, apart from the Swedish team.

The Japanese, however, were there. And not just holidaymakers: there was a racing team, too. If only one from Japanese universities, rather than the elite racers. And Scandinavia's top young female slalom skier had turned up, for a series of races down Dundret's most challenging run.

With a resort height of 823m and only 12 pistes, Dundret can't exactly rival the Trois Vallées in France. The piste on which the sturdy young slalomists were racing is only 1.500m long, with a vertical drop of 340m; and calling it black is an exaggeration. But it's great fun: a narrow, lumpy section at the top drops down on to a steep pitch, followed by an easy S-bend long enough to induce complacency; then, suddenly, there is a succession of sharp ridges over which you can see nothing ahead - until the last moment - except for a few hundred square miles of forest, and the lake towards which you seem to be plunging.

A second black run (in truth, no more than a difficult blue) was the other one open: this is a wider, faster track, on which the Japanese racers were going for speed in a most un-kamikaze way, since they were clearly not going to kill themselves, or anyone else. I stopped to admire their technique, and their outfits: I'm not sure whether baggy Hawaiian-print shorts worn over leggings will ever catch on in Europe, and I'm convinced that the garriest one Japanese holiday-maker was wearing - with "Pleasant System" and "Sports Asifed"

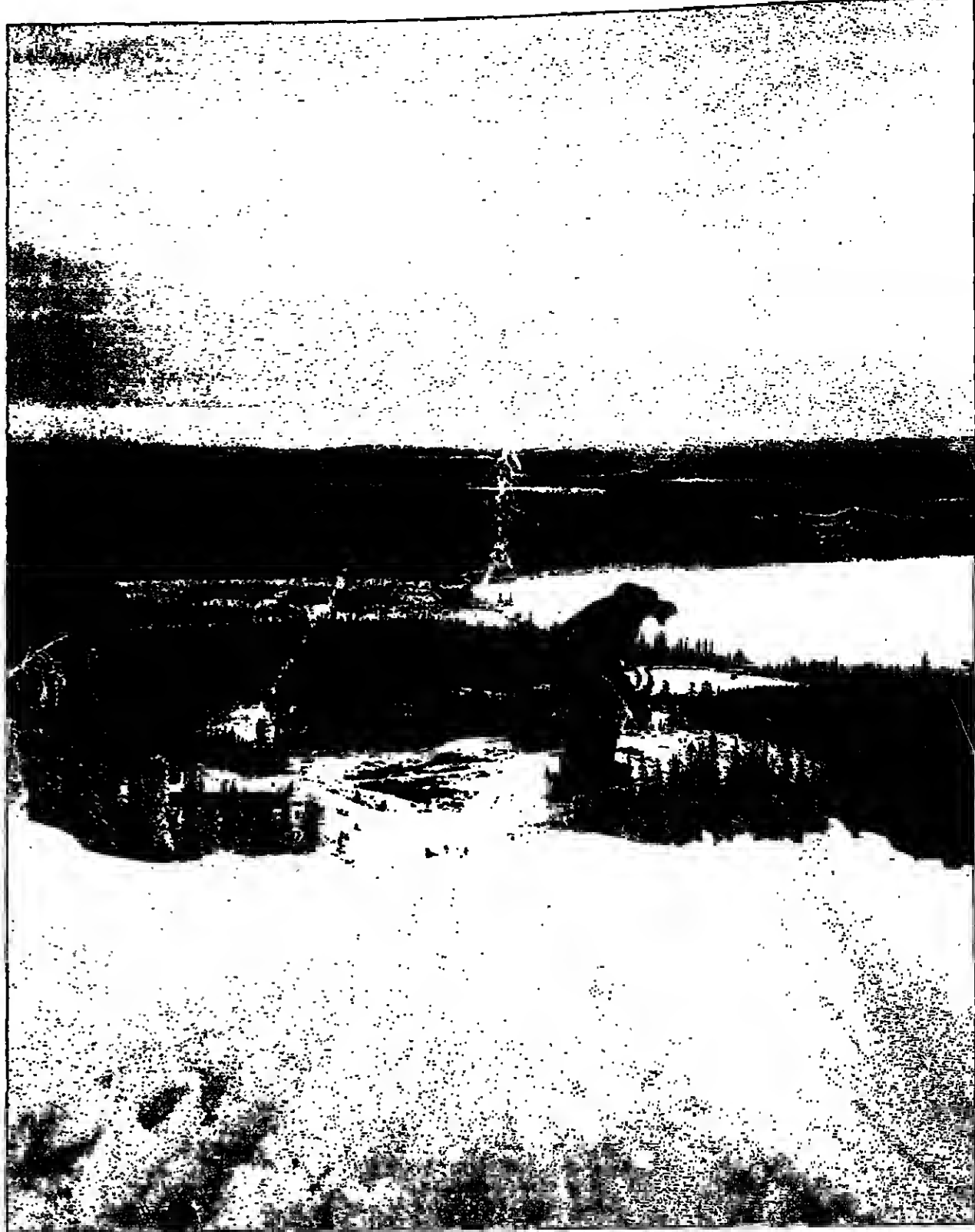
written across his bottom - will out.

I also stopped to admire the view. Saturday was a clear day (though not a clear night: if there were northern lights, they were beyond the clouds), and the sunset was sensational. In the strange time-frame of an arctic winter, sunset comes soon after lunch; and despite the floodlit pistes, the ski-lifts close down at 3pm, having opened only five hours earlier. Which leaves plenty of time for après-ski activities.

What should I do on the long winter evening, before the dinner and dance at the hotel? I chose to visit the living museum of Sami culture, and then to go down an iron-ore mine. Both were weird and wonderful, in equal measures. I spent an hour in a traditional dwelling of the Sami - not "Lappe", that's the Swedish name for the area's indigenous people, not their own - discussing with the museum's young curator their symbiotic relationship with reindeer, as the animals themselves snuffled around the compound outside. Then I rode around in a truck inside Malmberget, the "one mountain", with the mine's guide, Alf Appelquist, who took me on a two-and-a-half-hour vertical drop 175m below sea level to a huge minecar that can turn granite to dust, and should certainly feature in the next James Bond movie. I was very late for dinner, but I didn't mind.

The dinner was a grand affair: good wine, a cabaret, all the trimmings. It cost about £35 a head. The power of the pound has made even Sweden less expensive: beer in the ski-area café cost a bit more than £1, coffee a bit less, and a good pizza in the hotel was £10 with wine, salad and coffee. Eating Neapolitan food in the Arctic Circle, with the menu spelling out pizza ingredients in Japanese? That's strange. But Sweden, cheap? Stranger still.

Stephen Wood paid £171 (including taxes) for an SAS return ticket from Heathrow to Stockholm Arlanda airport. From there, Skyscans' flights to Gällivare airport, about seven miles from Dundret, cost from £130 return (advance booking). Dundret resort (00 46 970 145 60) offers three-night weekend packages at £214 (based on three sharing a lodge), including a Stockholm-Gällivare return flight. A one-day ski pass costs about £14; ski and boot hire, £13.



Chilling out: Dundret, 40 miles inside the Arctic Circle, is open for skiing for six months of the year. Photo: Stephen Wood

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Source: TGI 1997

The English country garden – Down Under

It's a curious fact that for the most part we don't garden with native plants, writes Anna Pavord. Nor do the Tasmanians, whose gardens replicate British planting – and seem to be an exercise in survival against the odds.

It is May time in Tasmania, where I have been for the last couple of weeks. Driving through the middle of the island, by way of Longford, the roads were hedged with great billowing banks of hawthorn. At Longford Hall, where we stayed the night (Tasmania has brilliant B&Bs), Rose Falkner's garden was weighed down with huge mounds of creamy yellow Banksian roses and swags of wisteria. Aquilegias crowded her borders, and the camellias were only just going over.

"You'll love Tasmania," said friends in Melbourne, where we stayed for a couple of days before taking the ferry across the Bass Strait. "It's just like England."

It's not, of course. There are only about half a million people living there, for a start. You could drive all day through world-class scenery – the Gordon-Franklin river complex on the west side of the island is a World Heritage Area – and not pass another car. That is a rare treat.

And though the hawthorn, the Hereford cattle grazing in the pastures, the roses and the delphiniums give an English visitor a strange sense of *déjà vu* (and a very pleasant one, since May is a better place to be than November any day), the English weeder is very fragile. Behind the gardens, beyond the pastures, the wilderness waits.

I brought some of it back in a box: waratahs with heads of fiery red flowers like enormous hootiesuckles, banksias that look as though they have been carved from wood, with great, domed flowers surrounded by a ruff of shavings. *Banksia marginata*, with soft yellow candles of flowers, was just coming into flower in the bush in Tasmania, the new flowers appearing on the branches among the soft, faded, buff-grey cones of last year's crop. The flowers, standing now in a jug in the kitchen, look as outlandish as a kangaroo in Coventry.

I soon learnt how tactless it was to say that, in fact, I didn't think Tasmania was at all like England. That's not what they want to hear. Once I asked a gardener why she was struggling to establish silver birch



Australian banksia

Photograph: Gary Rogers/GPL

when there were so many glorious eucalypts to hand. That was a mistake, too. Groves of silver birch with bluebells underneath are a potent symbol of survival against the odds in a Tasmanian garden.

We, too, rarely garden with natives, but because our countryside has been picked at, crawled over, sorted and organised for so many centuries, the contrast between gardens and landscape isn't so marked. And although we plant robinsias, not ash trees, eucalypts rather than birches, the overall effect here is still green, the same kind of green as the wider landscape.

In Tasmania, it didn't seem like that. The gardens made deep, absorbent oases of green in a setting that was predominantly silver and bronze. Because of the intense heat and lack of rain, leaves on native trees such as the eucalypts have evolved to hang downwards, to reduce the rate at which water transpires from the foliage. The way the surface of the leaves reduces that, too, so that when you look up at the trees against the sky, everything shimmers in the brilliantly reflected light. Our native trees, in contrast, with their flatly held canopies of green, absorb light.

So when we were driving through the Tasmanian landscape, the single-storey houses, with their shimmering tin roofs, did not stand out as much as the gardens.

The older houses were often marked by pine trees, such as *Pinus radiata*, which gave them a curiously Scottish air. And the Tasmanian gardeners I met were keener to show off green foliage plants, such as their beautifully grown hostas, brunneras and hellebores, than to tell me the names of the gums that provided a strange backdrop beyond the boundaries of their gardens. The strangeness of the out-there, and the danger of it, with its snakes and killer spiders, was the reason most often given for keeping native plants firmly at bay on the far side of the garden fence. In your garden, you wanted to feel comfortable and safe.

"Then there's all that cultural baggage," explained another Tasmanian gardener. "The nostalgia. The need to recreate the place that people still call home."

How much easier it would be for them if Italy had claimed Tasmania, rather than Britain. Mediterranean plants would need so much less propping up than the plants of the traditional English herbaceous border. Although it was still only spring when I visited, sprinklers were running on-stop to keep the green green.

I saw some triumphantly lovely gardens in Australia, with wisteria flowering in a way we never see here, (agapanthus like-wise), lilies blooming in loog grass, white arum lilies growing in sheaves along the creeks, white jasmine scenting shady verandas. And it wasn't hard to see that Australian gardeners have to work 10 times harder than we do just to keep their plants alive. But because this was my first visit to Australia, it was the bush that intrigued and entranced me.

Early in the holiday, we did a four-day bush walk which took us the length of the Freycinet peninsula, a limb of land hanging out from the dry east coast of Tasmania. The route led us to the top of Mount Graham, through dry sclerophyll scrub of oothamnus, honey-scented leptomeria, hovea with flowers like purple vetch, and masses of yellow dogwood.

The subtlety of the colour combinations and textures could not have been matched, I think, by any gardener. The general ambience was set by the sheoak (*Allocasuarina monilifera*) which looks a bit like a droopy, needle-like pine. The leaves are just scales on long, thin, greeny-bronze growths. The gums were blue gums (*Eucalyptus globulus*) with powder puffs of creamy white flowers, or weeping gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*). Both had glaucous, blue-green foliage, with their oew growth, of course, much showier than the old.

Under this top storey was a shrubby

under-storey, mostly spiky, dry-leaved shrubs with yellow and cream flowers. And just as your gardening eye was thinking that a slash of deep blue would not come amiss in this company, nature provided it, in the form of the blue grass lily, or the brilliant purplish bead fruits of dianella.

Beneath the shrubs was a further layer of flowers – tall-stemmed butterfly iris, with white, wide-petalled flowers. They are not proper iris, though they are cousins, throwing up a mass of tough, grassy foliage from an underground rhizome.

Most touching of all were the orchids, such as the tiny, solitary caladenias, not more than 4in tall, with their white petals flushed on the outside with a pinkish wash.

Orchids saved me from disgracing myself towards the end of our walk, when we had already been going for almost 10 hours. From a camp at sea level we had climbed a steepish mountain, and picked our way knee-crackingly down the far side. I had gorged more water than I had imagined a human body could ever hold.

Eventually we emerged on to the sinuously curved beach of Wineglass Bay – white, white sand and blue, blue sea. It was a perfect place to camp, a fitting climax to the walk.

Except that it wasn't the end. Against all the advice being offered by creaking knees and howling muscles, the guide said we had to go on. Our camp for the night lay in the next bay. We had another steep climb ahead to get over the saddle on the far side of the beach.

Before we reached the top, I was near to mutiny. I sank on to a rock while the kookaburras howled and mocked. But next to me was a great cliff of stone, cracked

in narrow fissures. Running down through the cracks were masses of tiny deadfollies, flattened against the rock. Ten minutes looking at those was my salvation. For their sake, I'd do that walk again. And again and again.

Walks through the Freycinet peninsula are organised by the Freycinet Experience, 36 St George's Terrace, Battery Point, PO Box 43 Battery Point, Hobart, Tasmania 7004, Australia (00 61 3 6223 7565).

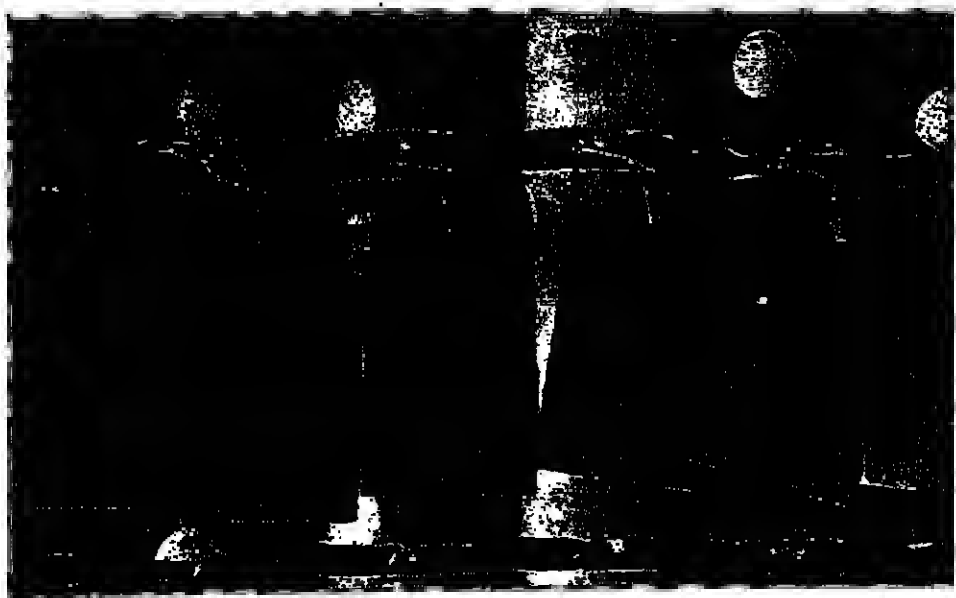
Collins Place Flowers, Shop 1A, 35 Collins St, Melbourne Victoria 3000 (00 61 3 9654 3155) will pack magnificent selections of Australian native plants and deliver them to the airport. The Celyn Vale Eucalyptus Nurseries, Carrog, Corwen, Cwyd LL21 9LD (01490 430677) will provide hardy eucalyptus and acacia for an authentic whiff of Australia in an English garden. Send two first-class stamps for a catalogue.

Eucalyptus globulus
Photograph: Gary Rogers/
Garden Picture Library

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SHOP AND SAVE: PLACE YOUR ORDER TODAY

Keen to be clean as well as green? Here's how to grow your own soap

Take a tip from North American Indians, writes Helen Lewis, and lather up with a yucca plant.

There is more to garden plants than meets the eye. Take the North American yucca, for instance, grown in this country for its sword-shaped leaves and showy flowers. North American Indians once ate the flowers, fruits and seeds, fermented the sap into a potent alcoholic drink, wove leaf fibres into ropes and cloth and washed themselves in soap obtained by boiling the root.

Along with many other plants, the yucca contains high levels of the substance, saponin. Although harmful if consumed in large quantities, plant saponins have some intriguing properties: the ability to form a lather in water and to be a gentle but effective cleanser. Saponin has other qualities, too: it can be an effective treatment for mild skin complaints.

The cleaning properties remove dirt but not oil, so, although useless for washing hands after tinkering under the car bonnet, they will remove soil from hands after weeding the garden and do so without stripping the skin of its natural oils. The soap makes an exceptional hair wash, and is included in many shampoos sold today.

In the commercial world, soap is

manufactured using wood or plant ashes mixed with an alkali. Oils – usually palm oil – are added, along with herb extracts or essential oils to give a pleasant aroma. Obtaining home-grown "soap" is much easier. Simply add a quantity of chopped plant to boiling water, simmer for five to 10 minutes, then leave to infuse for an hour or more. The resulting liquid can be used for cleaning either clothes or the body.

The various ceanothus shrubs contain an abundance of saponin and thrive in sheltered, sunny positions in the garden. All ceanothus will tolerate some lime – but not shallow chalk – and produce vivid blue, pink or white flowers in profusion throughout the summer. When you need a wash, just pluck a handful of flowers, wet them and rub them over the body. They form a rich, gentle lather with a pleasant perfume.

Chlorogalum pomeridianum, the soap lily, is a bulbous plant from California that is grown in Britain more for botanical interest than for floral display. However, it is quite happy in warmer districts of this country if given a rich, well drained soil and a sunny position. The bulb, if dried and with its outer skin removed, can be grated and used as soap flakes for washing clothes.

Philadelphus coronarius, or mock orange, is a popular shrub bearing

white, intensely fragrant flowers during the summer. The flowers are full of saponin and leave a wonderful aroma if wetted and rubbed on the body. The leaves and bark can be used, too, if first boiled and infused.

If you don't want to grow your own soap, there are plenty of wild plants around – the most obvious being our native *Saponaria officinalis*, or soapwort. This perennial can be found colonising damp ground, especially around hedgerows, woods and streams. It is invasive and will rapidly smother other plants, so if you want some for the garden, keep it in a pot. Boiled roots of the soapwort are still used today for cleaning delicate fabrics, including the Bayeux tapestry.

Other plants with high levels of saponin include bracken and ivy. Lastly, the fruit of *Aesculus hippocastanum*, the horse chestnut tree, contains an abundance of saponin. Conkers will readily lather in soft water if rubbed between the hands like a bar of soap – but beware, their distinctive aroma leaves much to be desired.

For further information, *Plants For A Future* provide details of many alternative plant uses, and the plants themselves are available by mail order. For details contact The Field, Perpol, Lostwithiel, Cornwall, PL22 0NG. (01208 875 554).



Flowers for a finishing touch. Right: 19th-century-style greenery at Waddesdon Manor Photograph: Will Walker

History in a pottery vase

Flower-arranging is, of course, an art – and one that is made all the more challenging when placed in a historical context.

Patricia Cleveland-Peck found some welcome help and advice.

That the British love gardens is well known the world over. What is less well documented is our expertise in historic flower-arranging. And it was because of this that Silvia Vasconi, a young lecturer from the Minoprio School of Horticulture in Italy, recently came over to England to tour some of our great houses and learn more on the subject.

"In Italy we do not have this tradition," she said, "but it is a feature which adds so much."

This is particularly the case with houses that are open to the public, where flowers clearly add life and atmosphere. Such detail is much appreciated by the National Trust, which hosted several of Silvia's country house visits.

To study 18th-century arranging Silvia went to Osterley Park House, just outside London. Here not only are flowers arranged in a Georgian style, but old-fashioned flower varieties are also grown in a walled garden behind the house. Lesley Orton, who heads the group of volunteer gardeners, explained that although only plants which would have been available at the time are grown there, she does use some modern strains. "As I see it, we refer to the 18th century, to the spirit of the time, without being totally exact."

The material is picked and stands in water overnight in the cool, flagged corridor to await the attention of Jean Grieve and her band of arrangers, also volunteers. The work is considerable. "We have done as many as 60 vases a week," said Jean. The arrangements do evoke enthusiastic comments from the public, but, asked Silvia, are they truly authentic?

"Not a great deal is really known about 18th-century flower arranging," said Jean. "We have some paintings, from which it

would appear that arrangements were tighter, with very little movement or design. Also, they used lots of small containers rather than one big one, although the National Trust has supplied us with some special, brick-shaped containers and some bigger baskets for the Long Gallery, which are as authentic as they think they can be. However, to some extent we are groping in the dark."

The situation at Waddesdon Manor, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's enormous 19th-century home near Aylesbury, is quite different. Here the archives are superb and Silvia was able to examine photographic records of each room. The Red Book, dat-

so plants have to come in and stay in."

One of the stunning photographs in the Red Book shows the dining-room table decorated with a profusion of roses. To replicate this, 70 roses would be needed every week; when Silvia visited, the display was made up of silk flowers which, lovely as they are, can only hint at the impact of the original.

Meanwhile, gardeners' records at Waddesdon indicate that during Queen Victoria's visit in 1890 a mass of orchids was used to decorate the tables, and that in 1910 Malmaison carnations, crotons and the white gladiolus 'The Bride' were used.

Having looked at the 18th and 19th centuries, Silvia tackled 17th-century flower arranging at Hampton Court with one of our most talented historic flower arrangers, Malcolm Einchcomb.

"Seventeenth-century Dutch flower paintings give an idea of the plants to use," he said, as he began to place flowers in a container topped with wire netting. "Tulips, of course, but you do find a lot of artistic licence, with flowers of different seasons appearing together."

He took one or two day lilies, black hollyhocks, bergamot, wild sweet pea, solidago, verbascum, echinops, acanthus, *Rudbeckia nitida*, campanula, valerian, wild mallow, marjoram and sunflower, together with a large rose, and composed a wonderful, loose, airy arrangement.

"The rose would have been a centifolia, damascena or rubiginosa," he said, "but ours are finished, so I've had to use a florist's hybrid tea". The colours were mixed: blues, yellows and pink with a thread of deep, wine red running through the arrangement – and when the inner container was placed in a blue-and-white china vase it was as if a Dutch flower painting had come to life.

For information about historical flower arranging courses, call the National Association of Flower Arranging Societies, on 0171-828 5145. City & Guilds has a two-part flower-arranging qualification with some historic content. Courses are widely available; call 0171-294 2800 for details.

GAMES

BAWN O'BEIRNE RANELAGH DON'T JUNK IT – USE IT

Have you ever, while running a bath, been distracted – by a telephone call, or someone at the door, for example – and forgotten to turn off the taps, and flooded your bathroom and only known about it when the furious people who live in the flat below came up to scream about the water dripping through their ceiling, and they've sued you for the cost of replastering and redecorating the entire room?

Well, that need never happen again, for you can avoid such trauma for the cost of an abandoned plastic bottle and a piece of string – and you will be able to give any passing children a valuable lesson in Archimedes' principle, too.

1. Empty a plastic bottle and replace the cap securely.

2. Tie a short piece of string around the neck of the bottle. You could also use a long piece of string, but if you do, you will

probably have to shorten it later.

3. Tie the other end of the string to the ring on the bath plug. (Actually, you will do better to read 4 and 6 before proceeding with 3. Then you will know how much string to leave between plug and bottle.)

4. Turn on the taps and wait for the bath to fill.

5. Answer the door, or have a good chat on the phone.

6. As the level of water approaches the critical mark, the bottle will be pulled under by the string and, in its struggle to reach the surface again, will pull out the plug – as long as you have judged the length of string correctly.

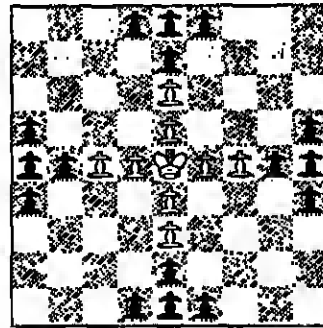
7. You can adjust the buoyancy of the bottle by adding some water inside if necessary.

8. Phone your local water company to complain about all the water they waste.

HNEFATAFL WILLIAM HARTSTON

A reader rang me this week to ask about Hnefatafl. Despite having frequently referred to this euphoniously named game, I have never in fact known the rules. The call prompted me into action, and a search on the Internet brought erudition.

Hnefatafl ("King's table") has existed in many forms since about 400AD, all played on square boards with an odd number of squares along each side. The games are all played by essentially the same rules: White starts with a king (or *hnefi*) on the centre square or throne (*konakis*), surrounded by a number of his own men. Black's men start on the edge of the board. The 9 x 9 version – known as *Tablut* – is shown above. All the pieces move like rooks in chess; any distance in a straight line, vertically or



horizontally. Only the king may occupy the throne. A man is captured when two enemy pieces stand on each side of it on a rank or file. To capture the king, it must be surrounded on all four sides, or on three sides when the fourth is the throne. White wins if his king can reach any square on the edge. Black wins by capturing the king. Good Hnefatafling!

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

John Bird, 50, founder and editor-in-chief of 'The Big Issue' magazine.

I think a lot of the people who have done interesting things often start believing their own propaganda. There are always a few people around who want to help you on to a pedestal, which is not particularly good if you're going to do anything useful, because the minute you're up there, people will wait a decent period of time, say, six months to a year – and then try to remove you.

So the idea of playing games and having fun – cracking jokes and being irreverent in meetings – has largely worked in my favour, because it stops people from considering me as a person of great gravitas. Games are about having fun and feeling very exalted, because I'm now in a position where people have to listen to my jokes.

If you ever have the luxury of a summer holiday with enough time to sit down and read *Socrates*, you'll find out how much fun he had and how many games he played. At

the end of the day, people didn't know whether he was the wisest man in pre-Christianity or a complete asshole.

In the six years since I started *The Big Issue*, I've had a lot of people trying to say this must be a stroke of genius. I remember on one occasion I met a neighbour of mine who didn't know me from Adam, but had seen a lot of television programmes about the magazine. I was walking down the road with a friend, and the neighbour said: "It's absolutely wonderful what you've done, helping all these people."

He was being really kind and nice and supportive, and he went on for a considerable period of time. After about 15 minutes' paeon, I turned to him and said: "Have you got any jump leads?" which I think was me at my best.

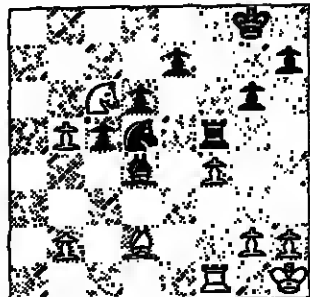
The Big Issue is available at any good street corner for 80p. Oh well, here's a pound; you can keep the change. Thank you very much, you're a real gent.

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

During the Tilburg tournament last month, Garry Kasparov disparagingly described the Latvian grandmaster Alexei Shirov – who is ranked among the top 10 players in the world – as "a talented amateur". Shirov is currently sharing first place in the Belgrade tournament with those consummate professionals Ivanchuk and Anand, so perhaps Kasparov was using the word "amateur" in its literal sense, to mean a true lover of the game.

In the following encounter from Belgrade, Shirov displayed his love of tactics and complications, but found himself up against a man with similar inclinations. 7...b5 is Black's most violent reply to the Four Pawns' Attack in the King's Indian. Black gives up a pawn to deflect attention away from the centre. Lautier, however, was determined not to be distracted, and got back on course with 15.Qe1 and 16.c5, giving back the pawn to regain the initiative. After that, the game went totally out of control.

When Black played 21...Kh8 (21...Kg7 looks better) he may have missed the idea of Nf7+, followed by Nd8 and Nc6. It is difficult to tell whether his 24...Qg8 was inspiration or oversight. The alternative was 24...Rf6. 25.Qe4 with a difficult game for Black, but after the exchange of queens and a pair of knights on d5 (see diagram) White's 27.b6 was just the

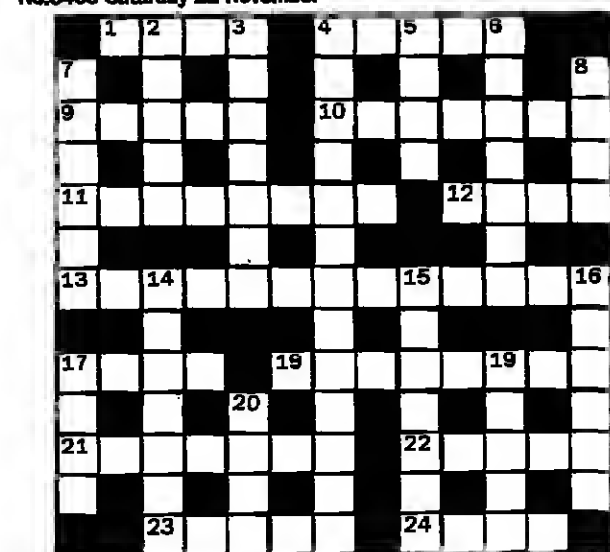


sort of move to make Black regret ever playing 7...b5. The result was an endgame in which White was the exchange ahead, but his 31.Re1+ looked wrong. At the end, 45...d2 leads to the drawn endgame of queen versus black pawn on c2.

White: Joel Lautier
Black: Alexei Shirov
1 d4 Nf6 24 Nc6 Qg8
2 e4 g6 25 Qxg8+ Kxg8
3 Nc3 Bg7 26 Nxd5 Nxd5
4 e4 d6 27 b6 Nxb6
5 f4 0-0 28 Nae7+ Kf7
6 Nf3 c5 29 Nxf5 gxf5
7 d5 b5 30 Bc3 Kd5
8 cxb5 a6 31 Re1+ Kd5
9 a4 axb5 32 g4 fxe4
10 Bxb5 Ba6 33 f5 Nf7
11 Bd2 Bxb5 34 Re7 Nf6
12 axb5 Rxa1 35 Kf2 h5
13 Qxa1 Qh6 36 Kg3 Ne4+
14 0-0 Nbd7 37 Rxe4 Kxe4
15 Qe1 Qh7 38 f6 Bxf6
16 e5 Nxd5 39 Bxf6 d5
17 e6 N7b6 40 Kh4 d4
18 exf7+ Rxf7 41 Kd5 Kf3
19 Ng5 Bd4+ 42 Kg5 d3
20 Kh1 Rf5 43 Bc3 c4
21 Qe6+ Kh8 44 Kf5 Kc5
22 Nf7+ Kg7 45 Kxg4
23 Nd8 Qa8

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3463 Saturday 22 November



ACROSS
1 Skin excrescence caused by virus (4)
4 Gemstone (5)
9 Unaccompanied (5)
10 Type (7)
11 Deceptive (8)
12 Daze (4)
13 Successful in the garden (5-9)
17 Principal (4)
18 Balloonist (8)
21 Typical weather characteristics (7)
22 Drink measure (5)
23 Ostentatious display (5)
24 Measure of length (4)

DOWN
2 Coral reef (5)
3 Crime against the state (7)
4 Commercial (13)
5 Land measurement (4)
6 Voter (7)
7 Adage (6)
8 Religious song (4)
14 Building (7)
15 Study of rocks (7)
16 Separate (6)
17 Rodents (4)
19 Thespian (5)
20 Nobleman (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Dinners, 5 Tease (Dinasties), 8 Unite, 9 Remount, 10 Twiddle, 11 Adept, 12 Pagoda, 14 Circle, 17 Capon, 19 Calibre, 22 Inspect, 23 Balsa, 24 Hiron. DOWN: 1 Doubt, 2 Netting, 3 Emerald, 4 Screen, 5 Turpani, 6 Abuse, 7 Entitle, 12 Peckish, 13 Dungeon, 15 Cobble, 16 Acetic, 18 Power, 20 Label, 21 Elate.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

East-West game; dealer South			
North		East	
♦ A J 9 4		♦ Q 7 5	
♥ K J 5 2		♥ A 10 8 7	
♦ K 7 6 4		♦ 10	
♣ 2		♣ K J 6 5 3	
West		South	
♦ K 10 8 6 2		♦ 3	
♥ Q 9		♥ 6 4 3	
♦ Q J 2		♦ A 9 8 5 3	
♣ 10 9 8		♣ A Q 7 4	

"I suppose it's the new arithmetic," West remarked gloomily after this deal. "We had three winners and yet declarer came to 11 tricks without discarding any of his losers."

After two passes, North opened One Heart and South responded Two Diamonds. West passed and, facing a passed partner, so did North. East considered reopening (which would not have been a success), but finally decided to let well alone.

West led the 10 of clubs against Two Diamonds and, looking at the full deal, you can see that South would appear to be due to lose two hearts and a trump. Now read on...

Declarer won with CQ and at trick two led a heart to the jack and ace. With no clear plan in mind, East returned a club and South saw his chance. He won, and played off two top trumps to reveal a sure loser. He was all set on a cross-ruff now, but after the spade ace and a spade ruff, he took the wise precaution of cashing HK before West had a chance to discard his queen.

Now everything went smoothly: trumping two more spades in hand and the remaining clubs on the table, he came to a total of 11 tricks for an excellent score. And what was trick 13? Why, West's master trump and his partner's heart winner were telescoped into just a single trick.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY

The Channel 4 programme *Movers & Shakers* broadcast on 10 November proves how difficult it is to make a sensible programme about backgammon lasting only half-an-hour. For those who didn't see it, the main theme was the aspiration of Mark Telcher – by his own admission a somewhat spoiled 17-year-old – to become a professional player. He has dropped out of the education system in order to pursue his dream.

The programme did try to explain some of the basic concepts of the game, but non-players will probably not have been significantly wiser after the event, while those who can play will have learnt nothing new. The programme covered Mark's progress at one of the Biba tournaments and touched fleetingly on the professional side, but ignored the true professional game, played only in London's private clubs. Chouettes for £250 per point are a very different proposition from a £5 game. They can seriously damage your health, or at the very least your bank balance. A glimpse at one of these games would have been fascinating.

What of Mark's aspirations? First he must realise that to reach the top at backgammon, natural flair is not enough. Hours of study and practice are required and proper coaching is necessary. From what I have seen of his play, his next significant step forward will be when he learns how to learn. Secondly, only one of the world's top players got into the Top 10 in a couple of years; the rest took at least 10. This is because it takes that long to store a sufficient base of reference positions, the key to winning backgammon. With the advent of computers that apprenticeship of 10 years can probably be reduced, but Mark is still a minimum of five years away from being a top-flight player.

Finally, if he seriously wants to become a professional player he will have to emigrate to the US where it is still possible to earn a living at the game. In the UK and Europe he would struggle to survive. Of course, he could take the route that many others have before him and become an options trader – nearly as much excitement, and a great deal more money.

Channel 4 are to be applauded for whetting our appetites with *Movers & Shakers*, the first backgammon programme since their documentary on the World Championship in 1985. What is now needed is a series of programmes on the game in order for it to reach a wider audience. Interested television producers please apply here.

17/OUTDOOR



On a roll: the rough and tumble of mountainboarding – ideal for snowboarders without the snow

Photograph: Penny Kendall

Surf the turf, to play chicken on a mountain

It looks a bit like a skateboard, but with three wheels instead of four, and off-road tyres. It does have a brake, but that doesn't work in the wet. Eric Kendall goes mountainboarding.

However, mountainboards have been specifically designed for rough terrain, with big, chunky tyres, optional toe-straps and a low-slung board that hangs between the wheels rather than perching on top of them. Beyond that, nothing remarkable, apart from the three wheels. That makes sense when you see one roll into a turn, the front pair of wheels steering, the rear one trailing and the brake not working.

With the rain sheeting down we headed hillwards, trailing our "mountainboards", unsure what to expect. To judge from the knee- and elbow-pads and helmets, it seemed likely that we'd have a few tumbles.

These "outback", or off-road, mountainboards are apparently ideal for snowboarders without snow, or for surfers when the weather's too cold for the beach. They obviously have something in common with skateboards, but my limited memory of those things was that bumps were a problem. A falling-off kind of a problem.

The board is not too good in mud, and frankly, it wouldn't bring you to a white-knuckle halt even in a desert. In any case, the chances of operating it with your foot, in extremis, are slim. When things get bad it's better to concentrate on trying to turn out of the fall line (the steepest route down). The alternative is to bail out cleanly – leaping clear and getting your legs going before hitting the ground, to minimise the chances of a body-slam into the hillside. Rail commuters would be naturals – the run-off technique is learnt the same way as when alighting at speed from a carriage: you do it facing the wrong way only once.

First impressions, that riding a mountainboard is impossible, soon give way to the conviction that you've been given a duff board. The slightest weight adjustment tilts it to one side, which feels alarmingly unstable but is in fact all part of the plan: you steer by tilting. Flip the board over, and all is revealed – a steering linkage that turns the front wheels, depending on which way and how heavily you weight the board.

The first tentative rides, barely moving at all, feel like learning to juggle: either you can do it, or you can't. But wobbly progress and grins come amazingly fast: some gentle turns, control – almost – and growing confidence, egged on by enthusiastic advice: "Just aim to the left of the cow!" "Aim" may be putting it a bit strongly, but in no time at all you can vaguely steer the thing.

Before any snowboarders get all cocky and head off to mountainboard from the top of Helvellyn in high summer, the key difference between this and the snow version is that edging, to traverse a steep slope or to brake, is impossible, which makes dumping speed during a turn out of the question – you carve it or you wipe out. Total commitment and total nerve take you through the fall line, accelerating as you go. The only way to learn is on a gentle slope, not more than about 5mph worth. If this doesn't sound much fun, bear in mind that this particular 5mph feels like 50.

Higher speeds, more concentration and severely gritted teeth lead to fast, swerving, linked turns. It happens so quickly, perhaps 5mph now, and the faster you go, the less you want to fall or leap off. Trusting the board to turn is a game of chicken – all you want to do is stay upright, but then you'll fly, ever faster, straight downhill.

Which brings us to the final point: a smooth, obstacle-free run-out. Make sure there is one.

What you need and where to get it
Outback mountainboards from Cunning Stunts (01722 410588) in Salisbury, and Soow + Rock, Cunning Stunts also hires out boards and protective equipment for half-days, full days and weekends, starting at £10 for the board for half a day and £5 for protective equipment. The company also gives impromptu free weekend tuition in the local hills, with all equipment provided, so you can try before you buy.

Boards cost £299, pads for elbows, knees and wrists £13 per pair and a helmet around £40. Boards designed for similar purposes but with four wheels also exist. The three-wheeled variety is much easier to ride, apparently, so steer clear of any other type.

Skateboarders and in-line skaters may already have appropriate protective equipment and skills, such as balance and coordination, but don't let that put you off – it's fun at any level. Also fun, for onlookers, is the all-in-one waterproof "jelly-bean" worn by some of the best riders; it gives protection from mud and worse. Beginners should wear the oldest and toughest clothes they possess.

Access
Mountainboarding is a new sport, so you make your own rules, riding where you can until someone stops you. Lots of common land, bridleways included, makes ideal terrain, though it remains to be seen whether enough boarders will ever amass to make access the kind of contentious issue it is for mountain bikers. Though the tyres are knobby, the lack of real brakes means that even soft ground doesn't cut up too badly.

A man, a plan, a canal – all strictly for the birds

Early in the 17th century the medieval port of Titchfield, in Hampshire, fell victim to a passion for hunting. Now the birds that flourished after the death of the port have vanquished the hunters too. Caroline Dilke took advantage of a 400-year-old disaster.

There is only one problem with this lovely walk, which follows the line of an ancient, overgrown canal running beside a nature reserve, then leads along the beach for a while and returns through rich agricultural land. When you reach the sea, at Hill Head, you come across Titchfield Haven, with its wooded hides looking out over to lakes, marsh and reedbeds. Anyone remotely interested in wildlife will decide to make a detour here, and as you walk on wooden duckboards above the

marsh, constantly stopping in the deep, reedy silence to look at birds, what began as a modest walk of seven miles easily extends to a whole day. The walk starts at the church of St Peter's in Titchfield, a village two miles from Fareham. Beyond the churchyard lie fields with expensive-looking horses in blanket coats. You cross a bridge over a narrow canal, then turn right and walk beside it all the way to the sea.

The canal is the key to the beauty of this peaceful, shallow valley. In 1611 the Earl of Southampton built a dam across the estuary of the river Meon, in order to enlarge his hunting reserve. This, as he intended, altered the ecology of a wide area. Tidal saltmarsh became freshwater marsh, with lakes, reedbeds and mixed woods, a rich feeding-ground for snipe and ducks. Titchfield, which now lies a few miles inland, had been an important port, but it was sacrificed to hunting. The Earl may have thought that digging a canal would be enough to rejoin the town to the sea and preserve its value as a port, but the canal that was dug turned out to be too narrow and was never used. Too late – the port was starved of trade, and became a mere village.

Fortunately, later owners of the hunting reserve took care of its wildlife, and since the Second World War, shooting has been banned and Hampshire County Council has managed the 308 acres as a nature reserve. Walking through these peaceful, flat meadows, beside the little disused canal that chirps and buzzes with life, it is easy to imagine men floundering about here, blasting off with fowling-pieces and sending their staggish spaniels splashing off into the marsh. The place is so quiet, you can hear the soft splashes of dabchicks. On the left lies the nature reserve of Titchfield Haven. The lakes where thousands of ducks come to spend the winter are not

visible from here, though you can hear the quacking; you can usually see a kestrel hovering over the long grass in search of voles.

After about two miles the canal joins the river, and you climb a stile and walk on to the sea. The nature reserve and the village of Hill Head lie to the east, towards Gosport. It costs £2.50 to visit the reserve, where bird-watchers may wish to eat their picnic lunch in a hide (last time I was there, with my eight-year-old niece, a heron killed and ate a fully grown teal – a gruesome and unforgettable sight; we also heard, but did not see, the rare Cetti's warbler). For non-bird enthusiasts, there are pubs in Hill Head that serve food.

After lunch, it is time for a seaside stroll. Walk west along the beach, past Meonshore holiday cottages. This is a section of the Solent Way and in summer is a good place for a swim; it also offers a stupendous view of the Solent, the Isle of Wight, and oil refineries looking surprisingly majestic in the distance.

A large, white house with a brown roof stands a mile ahead on the cliff top. After this, you turn inland and cross a wooden footbridge, then follow the line of fields under overhanging trees. The path leads to farms at Brownish (pronounced to rhyme with "Greenwich"); here a pretty old house with a brown-tiled roof lies at a dead end with no road to the sea. To the left is a pond, worth a detour in winter to see whether there are interesting ducks on it.

The path runs parallel to the farm lane for a while, then strikes diagonally across a large field, where rambles have imposed their will on the local agriculture. It must be a colossal inconvenience for the farmer to have people tramping through his cabbages, but the casual visitor should just enjoy the rambler's victory. Make for Great Postbrooke, the red roofs in the distance. All this land was purchased by Hampshire County Council in the Sixties, and is managed sensitively to preserve a habitat for wildlife. As a result, there are more

birds in the fields than you would see in an intensively managed farm.

After the path ends at a Tarmac track you turn right, then left into a lane, where a little further on a stile leads right into a grassy field. Walk diagonally across this, and you find yourself in the outskirts of Titchfield. Making northwards through new housing estates soon brings you back to South Street in the centre of the town, where you walk beneath the overhanging upper storeys of medieval merchants' houses – the only trace of the rich port that died during the 17th century – and back to the church where the walk began.

Titchfield is 2 miles west of Fareham on A27. Ordnance Survey Landranger map 196.

Directions

- Start at the church of St Peter's, off the main square of Titchfield.
- Walk down the path to the right of the churchyard, cross a wooden bridge, and turn right.
- Follow the disused canal for two miles, until a river crosses it.
- Climb the stile on the left and walk across the meadow to the sea (the entrance to the wildlife sanctuary of Titchfield Haven lies 500 yards to the left). Also on the left is the village of Hill Head, with pubs for lunch.
- Cross the road to the sea and resume the walk along the beach to the right, one mile, past Meonshore Cottages.
- Turn inland after the large house on the cliff, and cross the wooden footbridge to the

left. Follow the path along the line of the fields, crossing two more bridges.

- At the farm lane, turn right, then left, and follow a concrete track.
- After the farm buildings, take the path running along the field, parallel with the right hand side of the lane. Go straight on until you see a footpath sign on the right, and climb the stile into a field.
- Cross the field, then turn left through more farmland until you reach the track. Turn right, then left at the lane.
- After a sign to Great Postbrooke, climb a stile on the right and walk diagonally across the field.
- You're now in Titchfield. Go north, via South Street, until you arrive back at St Peter's church.



RECYCLED

Where John Lewis met John Hurt

Cavendish Square seems, calmer than other London squares – slightly old-fashioned, less hurly-burly, even cleaner than others; almost a film set vision of London as it is supposed to be. So it's the right place to come across John Hurt, that most versatile, most gentlemanly, most British of actors.

Even in London, preferring my bike to every opportunity, I find it pretty impossible to live without a car. On a bike you can't take home a new ironing-board or a case of wine, so you need somewhere where you can park conveniently. What's more, if you live in central London, you quickly discover that the principal occupant of Cavendish Square, John Lewis, is essential to daily life – the ultimate household store where you can get just about anything.

I can't explain why, and now I've probably tempted fate too far, but in 20 years I've always been able to find a space in the Cavendish Square car park, and been out of my car and inside John Lewis within a couple of minutes. It should be busy, a traffic black spot but somehow it seems to have a serenity, a convenience, a quiet Britishness not found elsewhere. Is this, was this, a secret? Have I given it away?

It's strange, the synchronicity hike rides seem to provoke. What an appropriate meeting in an appropriate place. Is not John Hurt the John Lewis of British actors – quality, value, variety, dependability, never knowingly undersold? Is not Cavendish Square the perfect location: not

flashy or vulgar, but restrained and traditional, with a modern edge?

I was riding past the car park entrance, towards the post box in the south-east corner of the square, intent on posting my collection of invoices and business letters. I let the clickety-click of my gears slow me gently to a halt and there he was, moving swiftly, urgently, purposefully in that familiar, slightly hunched, ferret-like manner. We neatly and simultaneously coordinated our postings and he was gone, leaving me for once, the cyclist, stranded and hesitating.

He has a gentleness in everything that he does. Somehow, he falls between those two types of actor: one that is always himself whatever the role, the other that changes appearance and character completely. His personality does not shine out, but he has an aura of steadiness; he's not a blank canvas but a solid foundation. There is that essential Britishness, some sort of integrity, even when he plays the most sleazy, villainous role. He can provide almost any role. He can be almost all things to all men: the repulsive Elephant Man, the creepiest, nastiest baddie; the most sincere, caring and profound hero.

A reassuring place, Cavendish Square, a place to convince you there will always be an England, that there will always be a Sunday afternoon movie starring John Hurt and tea on china plates from John Lewis.

Peter Reynolds

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23-1 others				

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19/RACING

He's fat, he's round, a new career he's found, Mick Quinn

Francis Lee sets the ball rolling while Kevin Keegan and Alan Ball play a peripheral role and Niall Quinn and David Platt attempt to get into the action. Now Mick Channon passes it on to Mick Quinn, the latest footballer to take his involvement in racing beyond the betting shop.

Mick Quinn told an owner on the telephone that the man from *The Independent* was with him. "Any tips?" was the query from down the line. "He says don't put black polish on brown shoes," trainer Quinn replied on my behalf. "And don't wipe your backside with broken glass because it hurts." This was going to be different than talking to Major Dick Hern or Captain Tim Forster.

Trainer Quinn still remains a posting difficult to accept. Mick Quinn may have been granted a licence by the Jockey Club, but he has yet to have any runners (that will come in the next fortnight) and in most minds he is still implanted as one of the great renegade football strikers of the last 15 years.

When you think of Quinn, you think thick moustache and a glinting smile, the sort of face that ought to be under a sombrero. You think bon vivant, a man who used to terrorise defences by blowing into their faces and rendering them unconscious with the alcoholic fumes from the night before. They said

Mick Quinn had a sixth sense for great accuracy in his playing days. He could find a party from any range.

The statistics hardly underpin this ungenerous cliché. Quinn scored 230 goals in 507 League appearances and was a player of considerable ability who found no marker more troublesome than his reputation. "A lot of top clubs probably steered clear of me because I did enjoy myself while I was playing," he said. "Any manager I played under will tell you I trained as hard as anyone, but I liked to enjoy it at the same time."

"That doesn't mean I was stupid and went swinging from chandeliers with just my underpants on, but I did go out and have a drink and a good time. But I did get a name, especially as I was outspoken as well, and that went against me while I was playing."

Now Mick Quinn must convince a different theatre of sport that he is for real. The 35-year-old Liverpoolian's interest in the turf stretches back the requisite years. He was brought up near Melwood, where the post code is Knowsley, as in the safari park, but Quinn does not go there any more. He does not retain the fondest of memories as his car broke down in the monkey enclosure and the inmates defecated on his windshield before ripping off the wipers.

Quinn prefers to recall his early interest in racing. "Being brought up in Liverpool I always used to go and watch the Grand National through the fence at the side of the Melling Road," he said. "And I used to pick horses against my Dad's in an ITV7."

A career in football hardly militated against interests equine. "You had a lot of time on your hands," he said. "So it was a combination of going to the pub, the snooker hall, golf, in the bookies all day or going to the races." Someone had to do it.

Mick Quinn was a quality act on the football field and spread himself across many clubs. At Newcastle, he was the bearer of that mystical garment, the Tyne shroud they call the No 9 shirt. The player himself trusts fondly remembers "the bunch of mongrels" at Pompey, men such as Mick Kennedy, Vince Hilaire and Noel Blake, who was so rugged that one of his managers, Howard Wilkinson, said "he even had muscles in his spit".

Also at Portsmouth was Mick Channon, who had already laid a bedrock for a racing career. When



From boot room to tack room: 'Mucking out and wiping a horse's arse twice a day is not too glamorous but it's a genuine passion that I've got'

Photograph: David Ashdown

Channon started training, Quinn sent him a horse, Land Sun, who became his first two-year-old winner. There have been 31 others since.

Quinn became such a regular visitor to Channon's Kingsdown Stables in Lambourn that he was close to being a pest. The Scouser worked in the yard over the summer and, two years ago, when he returned from Greece and PAOK Salonika, with football out of his system, he picked up a pitchfork on an official basis. "Mick started me off from scratch as a stable lad. I was up at six every morning mucking out," he said. "After a year of crash courses I'd been a stable lad, travelled in the horse box to Hamilton for nine hours and stayed in the lads' digs. Then I was up to being his assistant, look-

ing after horses while they were away, staying overnight, and entertaining owners."

More officially, he has been on the Jockey Club's training course at Newmarket and successfully completed three modules of a formal programme. He is now the first graduate to be granted a licence. After a decade and a half of having his pyjamas put on for him and tucked up in bed with a hot-water bottle, Quinn is now enjoying the fresh responsibility. He is the boss at the East Manton Stables at Sparsholt, near Wantage, from

where Mattie McCormack sent out the Royal Ascot winner Horage.

These days he is out at 6.30am, a time when you could imagine him passing his old self on the way in from the disco and kebab van. Those who still think of Quinn as a hedonist should have been at the yard this week. Raindrops were bouncing off his Atlanta Braves baseball cap, his shoes were covered in the gallops porridge of straw and sludge. Mick Quinn was enjoying every moment of it. "Getting up in the morning, mucking out and basically wiping a

horse's arse twice a day is not too glamorous," he said. "But it's a genuine passion that I've got and that's why I decided to give up football."

"You couldn't beat the idea of buying a yearling at the sales, educating it and then seeing it run, because a piece of you goes out on to the racecourse with the horse. That's much more exciting than scoring a goal in front of 55,000 people."

None of this new career, though, will be supervised from the saddle. "I've attempted to ride but I haven't found one big enough yet really," Quinn said. "When they race shire horses I'll have another go."

"I remember when the Jockey Club asked Mick [Channon] if he could ride and he told them that he rode as much as Jeremy Tree [the ro-

tund and now late trainer]. It's egoistical really, some of these trainers on their big, white flashy hacks. You can't concentrate on your string if you're on a horse that's jiggling around. And you certainly won't find me being one of those flat cap and tweed trainers driving a Land Rover. I'm more comfortable in a shell suit."

Quinn's moustache has gone now, and he is an even more fleshy character than the man whom the terrace troubadours identified with so closely. You could compile an album from the chants: "you fat bastard", "Sumo", and the hit single "he's fat, he's round, he's worth about a pound". The next time Mick Quinn hears shouting from the stands he trusts it will be to signal his first winner in a new life.

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON



Quinn: 230 goals and a large reputation on and off the pitch

Pipe's relentless flow can sweep aside Royal rivals

Considering the National Hunt season appears to have only just started, there will be an astonishing milestone next week when Martin Pipe celebrates his 100th winner of the campaign. Successes do not dull Pipe's appetite and he now finds himself with more than twice the number of winners of his nearest rival, David Nicholson, and almost double the money. Pond House is relatively sparsely represented today, though that should not prevent a sizeable payment returning from Ascot.

Or Royal, Pipe's Arkle Chase winner, represents the Somerset yard around The

him hest. OR ROYAL (nap 2.30) is now 3lb better off with Simply Dashing and, as he goes well fresh, must be the selection.

Coulton too performs better after a holiday, having won first time out for the last four years. The unkind have suggested he should have linked arms with the Scarecrow and Tin Man on the road to the Emerald City, such is his reluctance for a battle, but Oliver Sherwood will not tolerate such nonsense about Coulton (1.20), who can keep up the sequence today as his four rivals are out of the handicap.

Papua, a one-time Derby hope, pays for failure to justify his potential by being asked to heave his tackle over the splinters of eight flights of a three-year-old hurdle. Sound Appeal (1.55), who surprised better fancied rivals over course and distance, is preferred.

Away from the cameras at Ascot there are other captivating runners, notably Boardroom Shuffle, who makes his chasing debut in the Hurst Park Novices' Chase. The opening novices' hurdle contains course winners from a different sphere in Fujiyama Crest, Dettori's seventh on the seven day, and Zaralaska, the vehicle for a Luca Cumani cheeky trick at York before bouncing back after a month's ban to win the Bessborough at the Royal meeting.

At Aintree, there are opportunities for Storm Run (1.05) and Flying Eagle (next best 1.35), a very easy winner at Sandown last time. In the Becher Chase over those great walls of spruce, Sound Strong (2.10) is preferred to Young Hustler, who is finding it difficult to justify his name these days.

— Richard Edmondson



GREG WOOD
THE A-Z
OF BETTING

J is for . . .

Jackpot: Tote bet which requires punters to find the first six winners at a meeting, a formidable task only slightly eased by the tactic of nominating two or more horses in any leg. The problem with this approach is

that just two choices in each race — hardly a guarantee of success — leaves you with 64 separate bets, but unlike the Placepot, only one can be a winner. Even then, the dividend depends on how many other people got it right too, and could be nothing like the life-changing return that such an achievement merits. The exception is when the pool has gone unclaimed for days, and a hefty sum has been rolled over, but essentially the Jackpot is no different from other small-stake, high-potential bets like accumulators or even the Lottery — rank bad value.

Japan: Seen by some as a model for racing administration which Britain would do well to emulate, the "some" in question generally being those who would stand to become even richer as a result. In Japan, you can bet only with the Tote, and all the profits stay in the sport, meaning that the minimum prize for a Flat race is a lip-

smacking £25,000, and their stud farms can afford to hoover up the best stallion prospects from around the world. Best of all for those lucky enough to own a Japanese racehorse (they can actually expect to make a profit from their hobby), it is the punters who pick up the whole lot, for the simple reason that they have no choice but to do so. Quite why the relatively poor should subsidise the pastimes of the extremely rich, or why the introduction of such a system in Britain would be in any way progressive, is anyone's guess.

Job: If the tipsters' adverts which infest the racing Tbetext pages on Channel 4 and Sky are to be believed, jobs — ie, betting coups — are plotted at the rate of at least a dozen each day. This in turn implies that British racing is so hopelessly riddled with cheating that even The Queen is probably slipping thick wads of notes to her jockeys to stop her horses

when they are not "wanted". In truth, the ads in question are aimed solely at the gullible and the desperate, and could be ignored by any sensible punter, were it not for the number that are shoved at you as you try to find even the smallest snippet of news. Thankfully, as thousands have no doubt discovered, the BBC's pages do not suffer from the same disease.

Jockey Club: Formed shortly before the rest of the dinosaurs died out, and until just five years ago, the last remaining defender of Jurassic values. Following the transfer of power in racing to the British Horseracing Board in 1993, archaeologists are still sifting through the layers of sediment at the Club's headquarters. Notable discoveries unearthed include one former Senior Steward whose last memory is of nipping in off the street to shelter from the Zepelins, and another still clutching an ante-post slip for an also-ran in Gladiateur's Derby.

These days, of course, Britain's punters can rest easy in the knowledge that the "jobs" for the aristos' culture is no more, and the sport is in the hands of young, modern, forward-thinking administrators. Like, er, Lord Wakeham.

Jockeys: Can be divided neatly into two categories: brave, skilful and professional, or short, thick and illegitimate, depending on the success of your latest bet. Neither is exclusive, and some riders will flit gaily from one to the other and back again several times in the course of an afternoon. There is always more hile flying around for a losing jockey than there is praise for a winning one, since punters assume that a successful bet is down to exceptional precience on their part ("it stood out a mile, steering job"), but instinctively shift the blame when their judgement turns out to be flawed. Good jockeys do make a huge difference though, the

only problem being that comparing riders is as subjective as weighing up their mounts. The most detached analysis is probably that carried out each year by John Whitley (*Racing Research*, 01484 710 979), which is based on computerised comparisons of how horses perform when ridden by different jockeys. Kieren Fallon's regular appearance near the top of Whitley's end-of-year Flat report was apparently a significant factor in his appointment as stable jockey to Lynda Ramsden, from where he swiftly graduated to Henry Cecil and the championship. His latest study of jump jockeys, more to the point, indicates that Barry Fenton is a man to look out for this winter.

Jolly: The Slang expression for the favourite, which on average proves accurate in barely one race in three. The remaining 66 per cent of market leaders would be better described as The Miserable.

Simply the best bet for First National

Simply Dashing: Beat subsequent Murphy's winner, Senior El Betruti, by 15 lengths on his reappearance. Although he carries joint-top weight he has an outstanding chance.

Or Royal: His connections were a little greedy to expect him to win the Cathcart Chase at Cheltenham just 48 hours after taking the Arkle. Martin Pipe can be relied upon to have the horse fit but he was three lengths behind Simply Dashing at Ascot last season.

Stately Home: Winner of 10 races last season, he is only small but has taken to fences like a seasoned handicapper. Should give a good account but on recent form has it all to do.

The former National Hunt jockey Steve Smith Eccles (right) gives a runner-by-runner analysis of today's First National Bank Gold Cup Chase.



Jeffell: The Irish raider is big and genuine and loves to bowl along in front. There is a question mark over his fitness.

Greenback: Ran in a handicap hurdle at Ascot last time but I am not convinced that a right-hand track suits him as he has a tendency to jump left.

Fine Thyme: Guaranteed to be 100 per cent after a winning seasonal debut at Stratford, beating Monks Soham by eight lengths. Could fight it out for one of the places.

Around The Gale: The softer the ground the better, but his only winning form last year was at Bangor and this is Premiership stuff.

Wild West Wind: Fourth in the Cathcart at the Cheltenham Festival, but reservations about his fitness as this is sure to be run at a cracking pace.

Frazer Island: Made a winning reappearance at Cheltenham but cannot afford the same mistake that he made at the second last in that event.

Redeem yourself: Lightly raced and has obviously had training problems. I will be very surprised if he makes the frame.

Monks Soham: Geoff Hubbard loves having runners in big races and wins a few, too. Not this time, though.

Conclusion: Fine Thyme and Frazer Island can give a good account of themselves off decent handicap marks, but I expect class to tell. SIMPLY DASHING and Or Royal have it between them, but Tim Easterby's raider from the North can again put the Pipe runner in his place, even though his beating of Senior El Betruti may be flattering.

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21/SPORT

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997
21

Horse manure, peanuts, frying onions and flying Dutchmen – another night at Highbury



MIKE ROWBOTTOM
ON AN ENGLISH FOOTBALL MATCH

Suddenly the Tube train was out of the tunnel and station signs saying "Arsenal" were gliding past the windows.

"Who have they got tonight?" a passenger enquired of a father and son in red and white colours. "Coventry in the Coca-Cola," Dad said. "Nothing spectacular."

The long incline to the entrance became dense with supporters – surely they hadn't all been on that train? Must have been... walking briskly towards their common goal.

Outside, the night air was one part cigarette to two parts frying onion. Perhaps by way of concession to changing modern tastes – this, after all, was Highbury – the food bar outside the little lair that serves as the Arsenal sup-

porters' club was offering spicy beanburgers alongside its more traditional material. But the onions remained strictly non-PC.

And people were shouting. All over the place.

Either side of Gillespie Road, fanzine sellers attempted to divert the course of those streaming towards the lights in the sky.

"One nil down, two-one up" shouted the man on the right. "November issue."

The chirpy lady on the other side had a less comfortable form of words to deal with as she plied her wares through the evening. "Get your latest Up The Arse. Fifty pence worth of slugging off Spurs... Up The Arse. Your latest Up The Arse."

Every now and again she looked at her young female companion and started to giggle. Which was fatal, really.

A youth carrying chips cut across me, bawling out to his mate on the other side of the road: "It was a chicken bone!" "Was it really?" I thought. "Fancy that."

Over the way from the burger bar, an old boy in a cap appeared to be having some kind of a fit. "Nuuurr!" he barked out. "Sted ee nuuurr."

His large hands were clapping plump paper bags. Of... roasted peanuts. Of course. But I'd already passed him; and I didn't want roasted peanuts anyway.

By now the street was beginning to evidence the un-

mistakable sign of police activity – archipelagos of horse manure which caused a large amount of sidestepping and a small amount of cursing.

The floodlit glow was brighter and larger now above the roofs of the terraced houses which have gridlocked the Arsenal stadium into an expansion-free zone. Marbled halls? Or shopping malls? Let the club directors agonise about that choice...

The attentions of a group of men had been distracted by a smaller floodlight in one of the front gardens illuminating a row of binders ranged along a brick wall.

They stood beside each other without speaking, lost in their own private worlds amid the plain wrappers.

Not that I usually did that sort of thing myself, but I couldn't resist checking what all the interest was about.

It was as I thought. A mixture of standard fare – Arsenal v Chelsea, 1970-71 – and the more unusual: Charlton Athletic v Arsenal, Les Gore Testimonial.

Not only were there programmes for all tastes. T-shirts of varying degrees of rudeness were also being energetically espoused by a succession of vendors.

Alongside the conventional assertions – "Marc Overmars – Flying Dutchman," "Dennis Bergkamp – Living Legend" – there was a little number for the angrier Arsenal fan involving Beavis and Butthead in red and white kit,

proclaiming "Tottenham Kiss My Ass." The supine figure of a white cockerel was pictured doing as he was bid.

Near the corner with Avenell Road, somebody knocked over a sign with a bang. For a moment, conversations ceased as little surges of adrenalin pumped in a streetfull of veins.

There had been trouble at this spot earlier in the year before Arsenal's friendly with Rangers – the visiting fans hadn't taken kindly to being baited by an infiltrating north Londoner wearing a Celtic shirt.

But this was a false alarm. An accident. And the onward progress resumed.

Boyfriends striding ahead, girlfriends keeping up and do-

ing the conversational work. Lads taking their last swigs of lager before passing through the turnstiles. Young boys in scarfs and hats, reading their programmes.

You could hear the commentator's routine hysteria now as the big screen in the corner showed goal highlights from earlier matches. The visiting fans were chanting something indistinguishable but almost certainly insulting as the remorseless video show went on.

Quarter of an hour until kick-off, and the imperishable question remained, for everyone present: what was about to happen?

An English football match on a damp autumn evening. Nothing spectacular.



Doing the knowledge: Geet Sethi lines up another complex shot at the UK Billiards Championships in Preston. 'Because of the intricacies involved, it takes much longer to master billiards than it does snooker,' he says

Photograph: Peter Jay

Attractions of the massé men cannot entice the masses

For the followers of snooker's elder brother, billiards, the thrills are of a distinctly cerebral variety, but three-ball mind games, as Greg Wood discovers, are failing miserably to win over those many converts to the pot black bonanza.

Geet Sethi has spent the first nine minutes of his UK Billiards Championship semi-final compiling an apparently effortless break of 80, and is rapidly closing in on a century. It is at this early stage that a dilemma presents itself: at what point in a billiards break is one expected to applaud? Is it 100, like in snooker? Possibly, but then it all seems so easy. Five hundred, then? Ten thousand?

The shame of it for Sethi is that in the time it takes him to progress from 85 to three

figures, you could hand out voting slips to the entire audience, conduct a secret ballot and get the definitive answer from the returning officer with at least a minute to spare. There are no more than 20 of them, in an arena at Prestoo Guild Hall which will pack in several hundred for the afternoon and evening sessions of the UK Snooker Championship later in the day. Some, no doubt, are fascinated by the play, but others would be dozing quietly in the local library's reading room were it not for the free admission and comfy seats.

Five minutes later the score is 147-0, which on the same table in a few hours' time would make Sethi both rich and famous. At 10.15 in the morning, the best he can hope for is the £4,000 which will be guaranteed if he reaches the final (the winner of the second most important event on the billiards circuit will receive £7,500). As he and the other three semi-finalists try to concentrate on their play,

assorted members of the Guild Hall staff plod in, out and around, preparing for the serious attraction of Doherty, Heodry, and 19 extra balls.

Sixty years ago, it would have been the billiards that packed in the crowds. Players like Walter Lindrum took scoring to astonishing heights, using out the three-point shots of potting or in-off the red, but the two-point cannon, Lindrum's speciality, was the onusary cannon, with the balls arranged within millimetres of each other on a cushion. With gentle nudges, he would slowly move the balls around and around the table, until his opponents either surrendered or expired from boredom. The reaction of the audience was much the same.

Eventually, the rules were changed to force players to vary their shots, but the damage had been done. By the late 1940s, fans of the green baize had embraced the gaudier delights of snooker, casting aside its

CANNONS AND BALLS: THE RULES OF BILLIARDS

Billiards is played with just three balls: one red, and a separate cue ball for each player. There are four basic scoring shots. Potting the red scores three points. Sending your cue ball into a pocket off the red also scores three. An in-off from your opponents' cue is worth two. So, too, is a cannon – striking your cue ball against both the other balls. You also score one for potting your opponents' cue ball, but it is not returned to the table afterwards, which will end a break fairly abruptly. It is also considered to be very bad form. A pocketed red is re-spotted on the black spot. No more than 75 consecutive cannons are permitted. An in-off cue ball can be placed anywhere in the "D", but the player must then play up the table.

more cerebral elder brother. Watch billiards for 20 minutes, and you will begin to fancy that you can understand why.

The trick is to stick it out for another 10, which is as long as it takes to realise that billiards cannot be judged by the pot-happy standards of snooker.

Instinctive, machine-gun break-building is fine when you only have a cue ball to worry about, but billiards players face a more serious mental puzzle. "It's about the control of all three balls, not just one," Sethi says, "and it's really a game of knowledge. You have to play with a

soft touch, which takes a long time to develop, and because of the intricacies involved, it takes much longer to master billiards than it does snooker."

There are no whirlwinds here. Mark Russell, the best player in the world and all but unbeatable for the past five years, might just pass muster as a stiff breeze, but with 72 square feet of baize and just three balls, careful thought will still be essential in many situations. The best break so far this week is 466 by Rostoo Chapman, a surprise winner against Russell in the other semi-final, which took a little over half an hour to compile.

"In snooker, no one's ever on the table for that long, so you've got to concentrate much more," Chapman says. "Also, it's a timed game [matches last two hours], so if somebody makes 400, it might mean that you can only just win which means there's a lot of pressure and you don't get a second

chance. In snooker, the balls are racked up and you start again, even if you're 8-0 down."

Chapman sympathises with the spectators, both those who come and those who do not. "It's hard to appreciate the skill if you don't really know the game," he says, "that's why it struggles to take off."

"You can be at the top of the table, with all three balls within an inch of each other, and play a very good shot, but the balls haven't moved anywhere and it doesn't look like anything special. But in snooker you just keep potting and then re-rack, whereas in billiards there are so many shots, like massés, which come into the game."

Sethi executed one perfect massé, the outrageous, 180-degree swerve which is played with the cue held almost vertically. But what, you wondered, was the point, since there were so few people there to see it?

"It is somewhat demoralising," he admitted later. "As a

performer you like to play in front of an audience, and it's sad that there isn't one in this country. In India, there is a rich billiards tradition, and we get crowds of four or five hundred. But what can you do about it? The irony is that the better a player plays, the more monotonous it gets to watch, and that's sad."

India has hosted the World Billiards Championship for the past five years, but there was no tournament this year after its sponsor – a tobacco firm – switched its money into tennis. The skill and efforts of Sethi, Chapman and the other keepers of the billiards flame deserve better.

Tomorrow morning, you can only hope, they will at least get an audience.

The final of the UK Billiards Championship takes place tomorrow between 11am and 1pm at the Preston Guild Hall. Admission is free.

Sportsmen struggle to stay afloat in anchor role

You can see why television companies do it – it's the famous-face principle, nothing more – but turning retired sports people into presenters has never been a good idea. It's like, say, a TV sports columnist taking up opera singing. It's just possible that a new Pavarotti might be uncovered; but it's highly unlikely.

Punditry is one thing – when the in-house experts are free to be themselves and give us the benefits of their accumulated insights and wisdom (not that desiccated giggling at the back), bringing to bear on proceedings the fruits of their hard-won experience.

However, anchoring a programme is another matter entirely. Just as a football manager stamps his own character on team and club, so the presenter dictates the mood of the programme. If they are stilted and ill at ease, the whole show will feel that way.

Essentially, an anchorman is playing a part, the part of him or herself (I bet even Des Lynam works hard not being Des Lynam), and as *Escape to Victory* showed us for all time, sportsmen cannot act – repeat after me, sportsmen cannot act

(with one recent God-given exception, *naturellement*).

We've probably got Ian St John to blame. In 1969 he took part in a *Sportsnight With Coleman* competition to find a new commentator for the 1970 World Cup. St John and Idwal Rohling could not be separated by the judges, and the casting vote was left to Alf Ramsey.

Unsurprisingly, give Sir Alf's celebrated Caledonian antipathy he set the Welshman Rohling to Mexico, but undeterred, Saint forced his way on to the small screen and became a master exponent of the classic "I'm reading-from-the-autocue-in-case-you-haven't-noticed" monotone. He was, of course, hampered by being the straight man to another former footballer, thereby breaking the golden rule of showbiz: never work with kids, animals, or Jimmy Greaves.

The likes of Bob Wilson followed on, ITV making a big mistake when they poached him from the BBC and let him loose presenting programmes of his own. It was Sue Barker who broke the mould, though. Her first efforts were all rabbits and headights, but some-



CHRIS MAUME
SPORT ON TV

body obviously got hold of her early on and gave her some media training.

The secret is simple. All you have to do is forget proper pronunciation and break up your sentences with lots of arbitrary stresses and pauses, rolling your voice up and down for no apparent reason like a hovercraft in rough seas.

Gary Lineker has a stab at it, but has never quite managed to sound like anything other than someone reading a part from an am-dram audition, or an Arrao-sweatered Open University presenter.

Will Carling, enlisted by ITV to anchor their coverage of England v Australia last weekend, obviously came prepared, flanking his pauses like an old pro (though he could have thrown a few stresses in too): "Good afternoon. And welcome to Twickenham. For the first. Of our big. Rugby internationals. Here on ITV. There's a new order in the game. Facing a massive challenge. And it all begins today. It's England. Against Australia."

He'd got his presenter's facial expression worked out too, though only one unfortunately – rather dry, deliberately casual and only marginally ill at ease. He's got that slightly bland, slightly detached "this isn't really me, even if it is a nice little earner as I come to the end of my playing days" sort of look. But he's OK. There's no reason why he couldn't be the new Lineker, though you can't quite imagine him saying "twat" on *They Think It's All Over*. You can imagine him thinking it, but not saying it.

As for the rest of ITV's coverage of the game, it was, like Carling himself, perfectly acceptable. After all, it's not as if they haven't done this sort of

thing before (as they reminded us with the World Cup "World in Unison" theme tune lifted from Holst's *The Planets*).

The studio though, looked a little claustrophobic, with Carling plonked in front of a big bank of screens that brought to mind David Bowie in *The Man Who Fell To Earth* – "all of you! Get out of my mind!"

After the game they quickly got the England coach, Clive Woodward, into the studio. I've never looked at him closely before, but his face is clearly a homage to the round in *They Think It's All Over* where they combine the faces of three different people. His top bit is William Hague; the bottom is – what was his name? Oh yes, John Major; while the middle bit is Herr Flick the bespectacled Gestapo officer from *Allo, Allo*. And while we're on the subject of passing resemblances, Bob Dwyer, one of Carling's guests, appears to be the result of a gene splice of Roy Strong and Yasser Hughes.

Appropriate really, except it was Carling who said "Gizra job. I could do that." And I suppose he can... at least as well as Ian St John and no, you're right, that isn't saying much.

SPORT ON THE INTERNET

The sport where Britain rules the lawns

What sport was invented in Ireland and held its first Open Championship in Evesham in 1867? The answer is croquet. The following year it was held at that other nearby sporting hot spot, Moreton-in-Marsh, before ending up at Wimbledon, where it became part of the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.

Britain may not dominate the sporting world in the way it once did, but at croquet it still is the best. Last weekend in Bunbury, Western Australia, Robert Fulford beat his fellow Briton, Steve Mulliner, 3-1 to win his fourth World title.

The World Championship is a relative newcomer compared to the Open Championship and has only been held since 1989.

The official World croquet web site contains results of all the matches with the scores, which remain a complete mystery to me, and daily reports from Wendy Davidson, editor of *Croquet Australia*. "The audience were entertained by world-class croquet, both Fulford and Mulliner playing to a standard rarely seen in

Australia," she said. In the fourth game of the final "again Mulliner muffed, missing the roquet, and Fulford finished the game."

With most newspapers ignoring the event, the only way true croquet lovers could follow the championship was via the internet. The site contained profiles and photos of all the participants.

If you think that you do not have to be fit to play croquet, then think again. The site contains notes on how beneficial croquet is as an exercise

ADDRESSES
World Croquet Championship Official Site: <http://www.parisport.com.au/wcc/>
Croquet World Online Magazine: <http://www.croquetworld.com/cwo/home.html>
World Croquet Federation: <http://www.personal.u-net.com/~worldcroquet/>
The Croquet Association: <http://users.oc.ac.uk/~croquet/cas.html>
Croquet World Rankings: <http://users.oc.ac.uk/~croquet/worldrank.html>
UK Croquet Clubs Directory: <http://www.fleetham-jointingclub.com>

and "some stretches and rolls to prepare your body for play."

There is the shoulder back stretch and the finger stretch. For the latter one must "hold the mallet with both hands near the head. Release the lower hand, stretch fingers out and re-grasp above the other hand. Repeat with alternative hands climbing up the shaft". There are also shoulder rolls and the spinal roll-up.

There is no let-up in the close season with players advised to continue the exercises to prevent any early season stiffness.

Croquet is one of the few sports where women compete as equals with men (the Open Championship has been won by three women in its history) and where age is no barrier. So go to your attics and garden sheds, search out those mouldy half-broken Jacques croquet sets, straighten those croquet, repaint those balls, repair those mallets and start knocking balls around the lawn to continue Britain's world domination.

— Edward Abelson

23/RAC RALLY

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997
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McRae and Makinen eager to end psychological sparring

Tommi Makinen goes into the Network Q RAC rally, which starts tomorrow, needing only sixth place to retain his world title. Colin McRae, his only rival, must win his third RAC, with Makinen out of the first six, to deprive the Finn.

Derick Attop looks at the race, the route, the drivers and the cars in a refreshingly cavalier world.

Colin McRae knew exactly how he intended to relax in the little spare time he had before the World Championship decider. He would have a bit of fun on his motocross bike. "You must be joking," his boss, David Richards, exclaimed.

But he would be fine, he would do nothing stupid, the Scot protested. And besides, he had invited Tommi Makinen, his rival for the title and another motocross freak, to join him. "That's not what I want to hear," Makinen's boss, Phil Short, exclaimed.

Short, manager of the British-based Mitsubishi team, was relieved to learn his driver had emerged from his recreational jaunt unscathed.

McRae was exhilarated, Makinen frustrated. "I would love to have been with Colin," the Finn said. "I'm sure we would have had a good time."

Spend just a little time in the company of the world's best rally drivers and you quickly realise that this is a very different environment from Formula One motor racing.

The absence of wheel-to-wheel combat is cited as an explanation, the lower profile another. Whatever the cause, the effect is refreshingly healthy. And do not be deluded; the competition is no less earnest.

That will be evident over three days of the Network Q RAC Rally, starting at Cheltenham race course tomorrow



Preparing for splashdown: Colin McRae prepares for the Network Q RAC Rally by testing his Subaru near Great Tew in Oxfordshire

Photograph: Barry Batchelor/PA

morning. At stake is the world championship.

Makinen, the defending champion, requires only sixth place to retain his title and even that modest target will be unnecessary if McRae, his only challenger, fails to win.

The odds, therefore, are heavily in Makinen's favour, the objective uncomplicated for McRae. As for the pressure, it does not show on either of them. McRae is a phlegmatic character at the best and worst of times. He has no truck with false modesty, such as expressing surprise. He has won the last two rallies, forcing the season to an all or nothing finale.

"I'm not really surprised because of the way the season has gone," he said. "It's gone up and down and I've got to believe that, having arrived at this situation, I can do it. Tommi

should win it, of course he should, but you can never tell in rallying."

McRae, champion in 1995, does tell you he believes he probably should have had a second title sewn up by now if his Impreza had not been hindered by engine problems early in this season. "I wasn't happy and everyone says things in the heat of the moment, but that's motor sport."

McRae's self-assurance is justified. He and Makinen are generally acknowledged as the best, having assumed command from Jari Kankkunen and Carlos Sainz. McRae's impetuosity has given way to reason, yet the propensity for lightning strike has been retained.

He said: "I have changed, even since '95. I'm more methodical. Tommi and Juha are probably the only other two like

me in terms of temperament. But you still have to go flat out and, when it comes down to it, as with any top sportsman, you have to have that bit extra in your locker."

"You tend to find on various stages a point where one driver will have more confidence than another. It's just having a good feel for it. Courage doesn't really come in to it. This is about confidence."

His confidence, as Makinen is aware, will be soaring on his home rally, although McRae attributes the "extra lift" to the volume of support rather than familiarity with the terrain. In fact, he would be more confident of outright success if the rally had not been diverted away from the notorious northern stages, such as Kielder, to the "deep south" and its new Cheltenham base.

McRae said: "There would

be more chance of Tommi making a mistake if we were up in Kielder, and especially if there was sheet ice. I'm not saying there wouldn't be more chance of my making a mistake, but I've got nothing to lose. Tommi's got everything to lose. The pressure is on him."

It appears to have been taken virtually for granted that McRae will complete a hat-trick of RAC victories - he won in '95 and '96 - a danger he senses and has endeavoured to counter by making diligent preparations with his navigator, the Welshman, Nicky Grist.

"Everybody thinks it is automatic I am going to win the rally, but they seem to be forgetting not only the possible hazards, but also the strong competition. There are a number of guys, perhaps five or six, who are capable of winning and most of the others don't have

the championship to think about. Carlos and Juha, for example."

"Nicky and I have been training hard, particularly cycling. I'm not keen on jogging. With these long days now, it's important to have the stamina and also the concentration. It keeps you more consistent and more alert. You make fewer mistakes."

Logic suggests that only a mistake or mechanical fault can stop Makinen from retaining his championship. He can patently afford to drive within himself, but would he be more vulnerable if he compromised his natural instincts and settled for a minor place?

"That's the question," 33-year-old Makinen acknowledged, somewhat tantalisingly. "I will just try to find the right feeling for it. I know people say I will not be able to go slower than

normal, but I don't think that will be too difficult. I will be going at maybe 90 to 100 per cent. Normally you have to go at 120 per cent."

Makinen's record on the RAC - eighth is his best finish from seven starts - scarcely encourages optimism, but again he has an answer.

"I have had the proper car only once before, and then some stupid luck. I have the car now and I also have had a lot of experience in the British championship, so I know the conditions here very well."

Makinen, who has endured bizarre misfortune this season - be retired after hitting a cow in Corsica - is content to hear McRae quoted the favourite for the rally and willingly goes with the flow.

"He is at home and should have the best chance. But we have new stages and we are not

THE CONTENDERS

TOMMI MAKINEN
Nationality: Finnish
Age: 33
Car: Mitsubishi
World rally championship record
Starts: 55
Wins: 10
Champion: 1996
1997 wins: Four
Best RAC finish: Eighth (1992)

COLIN MCRAE
Nationality: British
Age: 29
Car: Subaru
World rally championship record
Starts: 49
Wins: 12
Champion: 1995
1997 wins: Four
Best RAC finish: Winner, 1994 & 1996

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE	Pts
1 T Makinen (Fin) Mitsubishi	62
2 C McRae (GB) Subaru	52
3 C Sainz (Sp) Ford	47
4 K Eriksson (Swe) Subaru	28
5 P Liati (It) Subaru	24
6 J Kankkunen (Fin) Ford	23
7 R Burns (GB) Mitsubishi	18
8 A Schwarz (Ger) Ford	11
9 F Lohr (Ger) Toyota	8
10 G Panzani (Fr) Peugeot	6

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	Pts
1 Subaru (champions)	104
2 Mitsubishi	62
3 Ford	51

A NEW LOOK AND A NEW ROUTE

Spa town, regency architecture, home of National Hunt racing and the Gold Cup, and now the headquarters for the Network Q RAC Rally. Dickens is not alone in having rarely seen such a place that so attracted his fancy.

The organisers of the British round of the World Rally Championship selected this elegant watering hole as their base for a new-look event. To hardy veterans of the early winter classic, it may prove a culture shock.

There has long been a lobby to bring the annual forest spin further south and this compact disc will re-sound to the accompaniment of an anticipated two million enthusiasts over three days. The shorter route - 100 miles - effectively limits the rally proper to two days in Wales after tomorrow's spectator stages.

Abandoned for now are the legendary tracks of the north, considered as the ultimate challenge or ogres, depending on your point of view. If your view is inclined to advise them what to do with their ultimate challenge, but the purists fear the teeth have been extracted from the old RAC beast.

Those in the "let's take the show on the road" camp argue snow and ice and calamity are not unknown in mid-Wales. Pools and slippery tracks

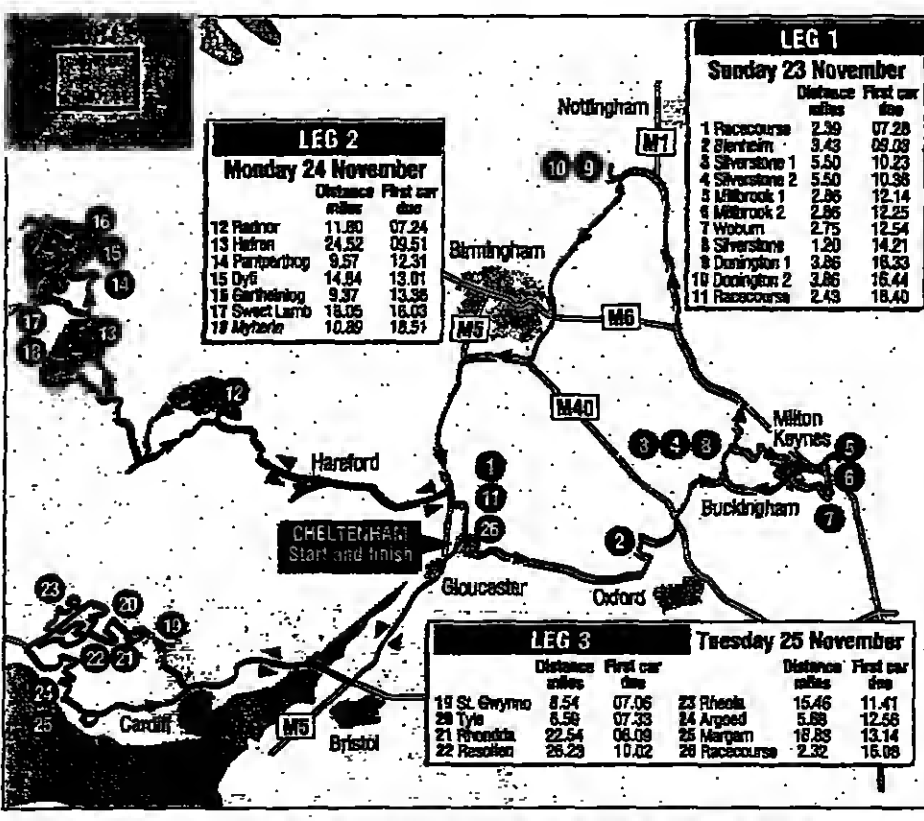
and the unexpected are pretty well guaranteed anywhere, and the organisers are confident that the unfolding drama will confirm they have not gone soft and the contest has not been devalued.

An intriguing innovation for the RAC is the presentation at Silverstone tomorrow of a "super special" stage based on a concept pioneered at Langley Park, Australia. Cars compete in pairs, effectively racing side by side around the 12-mile gravel circuit. We might even witness one or two Formula One style come-togethers.

Again it may irritate the traditionalists, but Richard Burns, the British Subaru driver, is among those who welcome the shift towards customer-friendly spectacles.

Burns said: "I think the spectators will find it very exciting and that can't be a bad thing. It may not be pure rallying, but it is just one short stage over three days and I think you can afford one."

"My only reservation is that the track is a bit narrow and it could be very interesting if people start sliding. But they've shown at Langley Park what can be done and I'm sure the organisers will learn from their first year at Silverstone and, if necessary, develop and improve it in the future."



SKODA'S CHALLENGE

The wind of change blowing through the RAC Rally is about to carry away a star assured a permanent place in the annals of the event.

But not before one more breath of its fresh air.

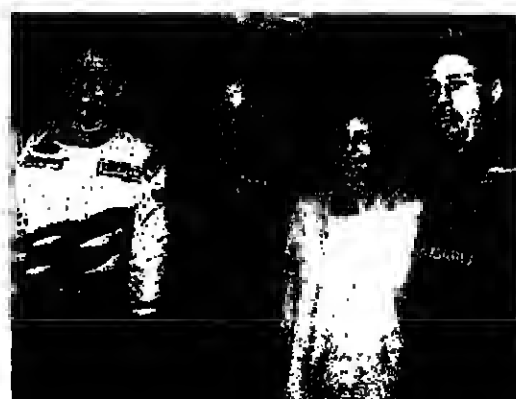
The Skoda Felicia, third last year for Stig Blomqvist, is in the Swede's hands for a farewell outing before giving way to the Octavia.

Skoda have collected 25 class wins in 25 years on the RAC alone. Blomqvist is intent on maintaining the success rate, giving the Felicia a suitable send-off.

He said: "It would be great to end the Felicia's career with another class victory. Last year we won not only our class but also overall Formula Two honours. That was a bit special."

Showroom versions of the Czech car will be driven by RAC Rally debutants, Melissa Helfink and Anna Tait, winners of the Skoda-backed LadyQuest competition. Tait said: "Melissa and I believe that we're up to the job. It won't just be Stig's performance we'll be celebrating at the finish."

THE CLAN MCRAE



Family business (left to right): Alister, Jimmy, mother Margaret and Colin McRae

Photograph: Empics

Whatever the outcome of the RAC, the clan McRae already have a piece of history to celebrate. For the first time, all three famous Scots are competing on the same RAC.

While Colin heads the cast in pursuit of outright victory and the world championship, younger brother Alister and father Jimmy joust for honours in the two-litre class. Alister drives a Volkswagen Golf and Jimmy, five times British champion, and Hyundai Alfas. British champion two years ago, said: "I just hope dad isn't too competitive. I'm sure he won't be far off the pace."

Apart from Stig Blomqvist's Skoda, their competition will include Mark Higgins' Nissan, the Renaults of Robbia Head and Martin Rowe, and a quartet of Seats led by Gwynndaf Evans.

TRY NEW PLANTERS AND SAY GOODBYE TO ALL OTHER NUTS.

PEANUTS

CRUNCHY PEANUT

ROASTED PEANUTS

CASHEWS

ALMONDS



Southall's passion to be No 1 still burning bright

One of the enduring pleasures of watching Everton or Wales over the last 15 years has been the certainty that, at some stage, there will be a superlative save from Neville Southall. The title of his first book, *'In Search of Perfection'*, summed up the goalkeeper's credo and, as Glen Moore, our Football Correspondent, discovered, age has not dimmed his desire.

Neville Southall sat down, slightly nervously, and awaited the opening question. It was his first job interview for more than 15 years, the last had been for a hod-carrier, this was to manage the Welsh national team.

"So," asked a member of the interviewing panel, "what have you done in football?" Southall, then the possessor of 81 Welsh international caps, two championship medals, two FA Cup medals, a European medal and a Player of the Year trophy, blinked in disbelief.

Southall did not get the job, but, despite a number of applications, he has been granted another management interview. Chairmen, it seems, remain suspicious of goalkeeper-managers, especially outspoken ones like Southall.

But more of this later, the flip side, for Everton supporters at least, is that his lack of success in the job market means Southall continues to fill Everton's goal. He may be less dominating on crosses than of old but, as he showed against Coventry less than a month ago, he remains a formidable presence and agile shot-stopper. That game finished 0-0 and *Match of the Day* made Southall and his opposing number Steve Ogilvie - at 40 a year older than Southall - their "men of the day". Did that make him proud?

"No," he said, "it annoys you. They are not looking at what you can do, they are looking at your age first, then what you can do. It's like saying 'look, he's not senile, he can cross the road on his own'. I don't feel any different, it's other people's perception of you - that because you're 39 you should be in a home drinking tea through a straw. One bad game is proof you've had it."

We are talking in a Liverpool hotel where Southall is promoting his latest book, a diary of last season. It is one of those books where the plot has run away from its author. A bright start - a year ago this weekend Everton won at Leicester to go sixth, ahead of Manchester United - turns sour. Everton get drawn into a relegation battle and Southall is dropped, twice, by Joe Royle.

"I didn't expect to get dropped, ever," he said. "If it happens it hurts, you are disappointed and you overthink the manager is right."



Neville Southall: 'I've got to leave Everton when the right opportunity comes. Otherwise I'll be out of work at the end of the season.'

Photograph: Peter Jay

A change of manager has not brought a change of fortune. Howard Kendall, the man who signed Southall for Everton from Bury in 1981, has also dropped him. Southall fought his way back again and, today, will play his 748th match for Everton at Aston Villa. But, with Kendall actively seeking another goalkeeper (he is currently negotiating for a Norwegian) his days must be numbered. "If the manager does not like [the way I'm playing] he'll get rid of me and I'll go somewhere else where they do," adds Southall matter-of-factly.

He nearly went to Wolves at the beginning of last season, but Everton matched their offer and, despite a feeling that Royle wanted him out, Southall stayed. Later, after he had been dropped, he would have gone to Chelsea, but this time Royle would not release him. With his contract up in the summer any reasonable player-manager's job will now tempt him away but, given Southall's status, and Everton's failure to build on the 1985-87 triumphs, it is surprising he has stayed so long. "I don't regret not leaving as Everton is my club," he said. "Everton is

one of the best things that ever happened to me and I want to repay them for what they've done for me. They've given me great times, I've no regrets at all.

"I can't see players staying 16 years at one club now, not with the amount of cash flying around and the Bosman ruling. Loyalty has gone out of the window. Managers move on so quick it is hardly conducive to keeping players happy. Sometimes you get pushed on even if you want to stay. Once you get to 28 you're on your way out.

"I'd go tomorrow if an offer

came in and the club let me. You've got to remember that I have to be at the end of the season, that's my future. I'm not stupid, if something comes along I've got to consider it.

"People get the wrong impression, that you want to leave, but realistically I've got to when the right opportunity comes, if it comes. Otherwise I'll be one of those people out of work at the end of the season.

"There's nothing wrong with that, it happens to everybody at some stage unless you are very lucky. When I was at Bangor I was drawing the dole, £5 a week. I'm now wealthy enough not

to work, but I'm ambitious. I want control. I want to do things my own way which is probably more European than British.

"But it's very difficult to get on that merry-go-round. People say you need experience, but experience of what? I'd rather be experienced as a winner than a loser. I can't see the point of employing someone who was a loser at his last place.

"It's fantastic. It must be the only sport in the world where, if you flop, you can get another job next week. People have made a career out of being failures. They are millionaires.

"In business if you are a crap chairman and get sacked you would be struggling to get another job. In football you want to sign as long a deal as you can, flop in six months, then get another job. Clubs seem to want someone who'll 'do a job', they'll be mid-table but they won't go down."

Some people, notably Bryan Robson and Kevin Keegan, have broken into the cartel but, adds Southall, "it helps if you have a load of international caps - not Wales ones, they don't seem to count."

It is not as if Southall has only applied to the big ones, the Sheffield Wednesday's, the Tottenham's, he has applied to Grimsby and Scunthorpe.

In the meantime he is trying to turn Everton's season around starting with a clean sheet at Villa Park today as they chase their first away win in more than 11 months.

"We won't get relegated, we are a good side. We have played some smashing football at times. Maybe we are missing some experience in midfield to steady us - look at Southampton since Carlton Palmer and Kevin Richardson came in. We also need a steady goalscorer. Sometimes you need a short-term buy. Peter Reid was written off when he came here, he changed Everton. It was the same with Andy Gray."

"We have some great kids, it is a case of buying time for them to come through. We could have as many as Manchester United. But Everton fans hate the word 'patience' because that is what they are always being asked to do."

Part of this is because the chairman, Peter Johnson, promised to lavish millions on major new signings but, apart from Slaven Bilic, he has not done so for a year.

"If you make promises and don't deliver you are bound to get sick, but things change overnight," said Southall. "He's an easy target and has taken an awful lot of flak. He spent £40m and, though he can get that back tomorrow, whenever I've spoken to him, face to face, he's seemed as ambitious as the players, with the club at heart."

"He needs to be honest with people, if there is no money say there is no money. It will help the players as the fans will get behind those we've got."

With 92 Welsh caps and 891 full appearances behind him Southall is closing on two major milestones. Will he make them? "I'd like to play as long as I can - though probably not as long as John Burridge. I need another two or three seasons to get to the 1,000 games." And Wales? "I don't want to start coming on for the last 10 minutes. I want to play on merit, or out at all. Coming on for the last five minutes is like stealing a cap."

A singular man to the last, he should not be lost to the game.

'Everton Blues: A Premier League Diary by Neville Southall with Ric George (B&W Publishing, £6.99).

Ray Spiller has turned a hobby into a priceless commodity - and that commodity is information

The whole (very) wide world of football was asking "Christian Who?" on Wednesday when news broke of the appointment of Christian Gross as Tottenham's new manager - and Ray Spiller was asked more times than most.

But there's nothing new in that - most people in football ask most things of Spiller, and they have been doing so ever since Ray Spiller Esq became the Association of Football Statisticians 15 years ago.

Spiller has a vested interest in Spurs' new head coach, born as he was just an Ian Walker hoof away from White Hart Lane. But while it's indicative of football's changing face that he has had to expand his already considerable knowledge - not to mention his database - to include information on overseas players and managers, it was actually a lack of any such information that got him into the business in the first place.

He used to work for an engineering company but filed football stats out of interest, and recalls contacting Spurs for information when the club signed the Argentinians Ricky Villa and Ossie Ardiles in 1978 - but he's still waiting for a reply.

"No one seemed to know anything about them," he explains, "in fact, no one seemed to know very much

about anything in the game, so I stuck some adverts in magazines to see if there were any experts around, and got about 40 replies. So I wrote to Graham Kelly who was really upbeat about the idea of me forming a club [originally called The Football Experts]."

Hard though it might be to imagine Graham Kelly being really upbeat about anything, the FA's chief executive must be glad he showed such enthusiasm back then, since Spiller has become invaluable to the FA, for whom he compiles statistics for every Wembley match and acts as a general know-it-all - in the nicest sense of the phrase.

He also supplies data to at least eight national newspapers and several football magazines as well as Teletext, Littlewoods and Coca-Cola. And, in keeping with the fashion of football's peripheral figures - David Mellor, Danny Baker and Eric Hall among them - achieving hero (or anti-hero) status, the 44-year-old Spiller has even recently appeared as a model (for the BBC's *Match of the Day* magazine) and is a favourite among television and radio producers keen to pit him against wannabe experts.

But, frankly, it is like trying to breach the Manchester United defence (and Spiller

will know how many times that's been done in recent years): it takes a good 'un to beat him.

On Granada TV last weekend, for example, he was asked which player scored the winner in three FA Cup semi-finals but finished up on the losing side in each year's final. Spiller was, for once, stumped (the answer was Billy Bremner in 1963, '70 and '73).

Still, you would expect him to know a thing or two about

football. His library consists of at least 3,000 books, he has newspapers dating back to the war, and his three computers store details on upwards of 250,000 matches and 36,000 players - that is every player who has played League football since 1888.

In fact, there is not an awful lot he does not know about football: transfer fees can be a grey area (the figures vary); dingo missed penalties and bookings (they are seldom recorded), but ask him about sendings-off or international caps or undefeated runs or record victories, or even about players with disabilities (there was a one-armed player who once played for Germany against England, apparently) and Spiller, like any striker worth his salt, regularly produces the goods.

It all started out as a labour of love, of course, but it has turned into quite nice little earner; the Association (ie Spiller) turns over around £80,000 a year, not bad considering it has just the one employee. And his 1994/95 income was boosted to the tune of £6,000 after his £100 a 66-1 with Ladbrokes on a Premiership player scoring five goals paid off when Andy Cole duly obliged (against Ipswich).

Now he is sweating on a £250 bet at 50-1 with William Hill ("Ladbrokes told me where to go") on a player scoring six goals in the Premiership or Football League, and was livid with the then Burnley manager Adrian Heath for substituting five-goal striker Paul Barnes with minutes to go in a game against Stockport last season. (The feat has not, by the way, been achieved since 1968, when Geoff Hurst scored six for West Ham against Sunderland.)

Cynics might call him a crainspotter-made-good, but in reality he is unique in that he has turned a hobby into a priceless commodity and become a font of knowledge on a game which is expanding out of all recognition.

One wonders, in fact, how much longer he will be able to work a 16-hour day (at least), single-handedly, out of his modest offices in Basildon, even if his task has been eased somewhat now that most of the big clubs - not before time, it has to be said - employ a statistician and/or a historian.

However, it is still to Spiller that most enquiries are referred - to paraphrase that AA ad, he is usually the man who can help in an emergency.

But even he is just hoping that, come the end of the season, he will not be the only one with the low-down on Christian Gross.

Praise is reserved at second coming of Big Ron

"...And finally, it is expected that Sheffield Wednesday will announce Ron Atkinson as their new manager..."

Something tells me that the prophets might just have had something a little more grandiose in mind when planning the announcement of the Second Coming. Nevertheless, that early morning radio broadcast was sufficient to signal to me, and thousands of other followers of the Blue and White variety, that the Messiah had returned.

But is it really the return of the Prodigal Son or is Judas simply riding back into town on the Premiership gravy train? In reality, we did not have much of a choice when it came to replacing the beleaguered David Pleat; the array of charismatically challenged hopefuls that was an offer did not exactly inspire. Anybody who did fancy was either unapproachable, washing their hair or had conveniently looked the other way to avoid making eye contact.

So my immediate response was one of unbridled joy, after all only six years had passed since we had, under Atkinson's astute guidance, conquered all before us, won the only piece of silverware of any note in the last 60 years of the club's history. It is undoubtedly a measure of his influence that after the manner of his well-documented departure we are, albeit slightly more cautiously, prepared to accept him back in our latest hour of need. But that's the magic of Big Ron. Even now, in the pages of the fanzine *Spitting Fire*, the club's recent failings are still compared with what was and might have been had Ron not been lured away by Doug Ellis's 40 pieces of silver.

OK, so perhaps his first stint at Hillsborough was not always as miraculous as we would have you believe. His make-shift team of Wilko cast-offs, ageing journeymen and the infantile Boy Wonder barely retained its First Division status at the first attempt. It then, comically,

contrived to lose it a year later in a farcical end-of-season run in that saw miracles and the impossible happen with frightening regularity. However, through the despair of the summer of 1990 when inspiration and hope were desperately lacking in the Blue half of the Steel City, a force and belief of such magnitude and resolution was forged. Big Ron's self-proclaimed "Barney Army" was born.

The opening day of the 1990-91 season at Ipswich bore witness to the growing religion and the legion of disci-

ples that were to follow the Messiah and his 11 skilful, ball-playing Apostles to the four corners of the globe. On that day 6,000 believers made the first of many pilgrimages. To say it was a spiritual occasion would not be overstating the mark. Ask anyone who was there. The self-belief that was evident that day almost single-handedly carried us through the whole season and as we progressed, so the belief grew. Promotion and League Cup glory followed, but as we all know there was to be a sting in the tail.

This time round Atkinson's brief is once again a simple one: survival. The only difference being that this time he has at his disposal a far stronger and more gifted squad than the one he inherited from the much maligned Peter Eustace. In Beni Carbone and Paolo Di Canio he has the type of players who will thrive under his style of management. The real test will be to lift the rest of Pleat's demoralised troops.

Like most football fans, we Wednesdayites are a fickle bunch but perhaps for the time being at least we are prepared to forgive. Just how forgiving we will be remains to be seen. In the meantime judgement will be reserved of course, but if the miracles can still be performed, and if there is a chance that we can carry on where we left off back in the Summer of '91, we may just find it in our hearts to forget.

FAN'S EYE VIEW
No 233
SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY
BY
ROB HOWE



OLIVIA BLAIR
ON THE MAN WHO KNEW ALL ABOUT SPURS' NEW COACH - AND PLENTY MORE BESIDES

Arsenal 'cup final' sees Big Ron back in business

Ron Atkinson wanted to be back in the big-time - and you do not get much more grandiose than playing Arsenal at home. Guy Hodgson looks at the return of Big Ron to Sheffield Wednesday and at the weekend's other leading Premiership fixtures, while Nick Harris (below) analyses the programme match by match.

People either love Ron Atkinson or hate him, sometimes going from one extreme to the other in a matter of moments. They dubbed "Judas" on Hillsborough's walls when he left Sheffield Wednesday in 1991 but, in retrospect, "Lazarus" would have been more appropriate. Big Ron is back in management, back in the limelight and back at Wednesday. Just when you thought football had seen the last of his beaming grin he bounces in again promising nothing but a lack of tedium. "We have 25 cup finals," he said last week and this afternoon is the first: against Arsenal.

In theory it should be an easier fixture for a team who beat Manchester United in their last Premiership game but, as usual, Atkinson's view came from the sun-bed side of life. "I can't wait for kick-off," he said. "Arsenal at home is one of the great fixtures. If you want to compete, if you like a challenge, they are one of the teams you look forward to meeting. It's a tough match for us but I promise it'll be tough for them too."

That depends on which Wednesday makes it to the field, of course. Atkinson has only seen his new charges on television, but those who have watched them live have seen them lurch from the pathetic at Old Trafford to the sublime against Bolton last time out. They beat Wanderers 5-0 under the guidance of Peter

Shreeves, who was elevated on a temporary basis in the wake of David Pleat's dismissal. The loyal assistant is back in the same role this week, although Atkinson has insisted Shreeves has had most of the input since his arrival. "I've had a watching brief," he said. "The first thing I told Peter was 'whatever you did against Bolton, do it this week and I hope you do it every week of the season'."

It's been difficult waiting for the match to come but to some ways it's been the easiest selection I've ever had. It had to be same again after Bolton. It was a fantastic result. Fifteen months ago it would have taken a fantastic set of circumstances for him to be warmly welcomed back by Wednesday supporters which shows that football is not so much a funny game as downright perverse. David Beckham, lauded and lampooned almost as much as Big Ron, knows that already and he will be able to retrace his entrance into a showbiz world at Selhurst Park today.

Beckham was a youngster oozing with promise before he scored from his own half against Wimbledon a year last August and with one kick shot into general recognition. Since the Manchester United midfielder has entered surreal life that includes Posh Spice, the paparazzi and terrace taunts every time he plays. Two things are guaranteed today: Beckham will not score and Anfield, but not now. On their last trip over the Pennines they were walloped 7-0 by Manchester United and today the sadistic fixture computer has come up with Liverpool away. It is difficult to decide who you feel more sympathy for, the Barnsley team, who look to have the same chance as Christians in the Coliseum, or Liverpool who will have to approach a magnificent seven to stop their supporters making unflattering comparisons with the team down the M62.

Liverpool have scored 13 goals in their last four home matches while conceding none, which is not bad for a team who endure more noises of displeasure from their own fans than any other league side. At least no one can complain at Roy Evans' choice of strikers today as Robbie Fowler's suspension means Michael Owen and Karl-Heinz Riedle can complement rather than compete with each other. Paul Ince, however, starts a suspension. Blackburn Rovers, third, face Chelsea, who are fourth, at Ewood Park in a fixture that could define either club's season. It is the same for Aston Villa and Everton. If either loses at Villa Park today the poor manager will hear calls for his dismissal. Brian Little, or Howard Kendall will have at least one consolation: high profile football bosses are hard to eliminate. Big Ron proves that.

Aston Villa v Everton

Leading scorer: Taylor 4
Last season: 3-1

Savo Milosevic is likely to spearhead Villa's attack. Dwight Yorke might play, if freed from international friendly duty with Trinidad and Tobago. Goalkeeper Michael Oakes will start only his fourth game of the season as a replacement for Mark Bosnich, who is on World Cup play-off duty with Australia. Gareth Southgate is likely to be out for six weeks due to the ankle ligament injury that he suffered while playing for England last week. Ugo Ehiogu should deputise. Midfielder Ian Taylor starts a three-match ban. Mark Draper (hamstring) and Stan Collymore (banned) may return. Everton have not won an away game in the Premiership for 11 months. Their major injury doubt today is Dave Watson, struggling to recover from a hamstring injury. Craig Short, who has a similar injury, should be fit. Croatian defender Slaven Bilic, who has been back in training after a bout of flu, should play. Terry Phelan is hoping to overcome a calf strain. Gary Speed has recovered from a similar injury.

Blackburn v Chelsea

Leading scorer: Sutton 11
Last season: 1-1

Blackburn, beaten only once in the Premiership this season and one place above Chelsea, are likely to be without defender Colin Hendry for several more weeks. Hendry is still recovering from the knee ligament injury which kept him out for the recent win over Everton and Scotland's friendly in France. Norwegian Tore Pedersen is likely to continue deputising for Hendry while Swedish striker Martin Dahlin is struggling to shake off a back problem. Blackburn could go top of the Premiership if they win. Frank Sinclair, could be the only survivor of Wednesday's Coca-Cola Cup win over Southampton to feature in Chelsea's starting line-up. Dennis Wise is struggling to recover after taking a knock in midweek. Michael Duberry, out since damaging his ankle in September, could return alongside Franck Leboeuf at the back, while Celestine Babayaro will come back in for Danny Granville. Gianfranco Zola, Roberto Di Matteo and Gianluca Vialli could all return while Dan Petrescu is back after international duty for Romania.

Derby v Coventry

Leading scorer: Winchop 9
Last season: 2-1

Derby have won only one of their last six games and lost their unbeaten Pride Park record in midweek, defeated 1-0 by Newcastle in the Coca-Cola Cup. They are still without their influential defender Igor Simac, out with a back problem. Italian midfielder Stefano Eranio (hamstring) played in midweek after six weeks out with a hamstring injury and should continue his comeback. Jamaica striker Dean Burton will also be back in the squad following World Cup qualification with his adopted country. Midfielder Robin van der Laan is injured. Coventry manager Gordon Strachan is likely to start with Darren Huckerby partnering Dion Dublin up front. Huckerby went on as substitute for the former Cardiff striker Simon Haworth at Arsenal in the mid-week 1-0 Coca-Cola Cup defeat and immediately created chances. Despite receiving treatment all week for a thigh muscle injury, Huckerby is expected to be fully fit. Coventry were beaten three times by Derby last season but have lost only once in their last nine Premiership matches.

Leicester v Bolton

Leading scorer: Marshall 7
Last season: No fixture

Leicester will be without England Under-21 striker Emile Heskey, who starts a three-match ban. Ian Marshall is expected to move into attack to replace him. Steve Walsh is still troubled by his cracked ribs but should be fit, while Kasey Keller has returned from international duty with the USA determined to regain his first team place ahead of Pegguy Arphexad. Leicester will be looking to recover the form that had taken them into the Premiership's top six before losing at home to Wimbledon in their last game and dropping to seventh. Bolton, 18th in the Premiership and with only two wins this season, will be without midfield playmaker Scott Sellers, who is serving a six-week game of a three-match ban. Gerry Taggart is still serving a six-week game of a three-match ban. Dean Holdsworth is available after being cup-tied and missing the 2-1 Coca-Cola Cup defeat at Middlesbrough in midweek. Holdsworth will partner Nathan Blake up front, while Peter Beardsley is likely to play ahead of the Icelandic youngster Amar Gunnlaugsson.

Liverpool v Barnsley

Leading scorer: Fowler 6
Last season: No fixture

Liverpool will be without Paul Ince and Robbie Fowler, both suspended. Ince starts a three-match ban while top scorer Fowler missed two games. Michael Owen, who scored a hat-trick in the 3-0 midweek Coca-Cola Cup win against Grimsby, will continue up front in Fowler's place while Jason McAteer, Michael Thomas, Jamie Carragher or Patrick Berger are in contention for Ince's midfield slot. Defender Mark Wright, who has missed 12 games with a back problem, is back in training but will not feature. Barnsley, who have now conceded 24 goals in the last five Premiership away fixtures, will be without Ashley Ward for their visit to Anfield after his failure to shrug off a strain of viral meningitis. He is the only injury doubt for Danny Wilson, whose side have not won a point away from home for over three months. Swedish defender Peter Markstedt, who signed for the Tykes from Vasteras on Thursday, could make his debut. Barnsley have lost ten of the 14 games so far this season, and are two points adrift at the bottom of the table.

...And statistics

How Manchester United apply the finishing touch

How do you stop Manchester United? As the Premiership's other 19 clubs attempt to answer what has become a perennial question, they might like to consider one possible solution: finish every match at half-time.

An analysis of the season's games so far shows that United are generally more effective in the second half. If every match had ended after 45 minutes this season the Premiership leaders would be only fourth in the table: on the basis of half-time results they would have had only 22 points, compared with the 28 they have actually earned.

This confirms the pattern of last season, when United, the champions, would have finished fourth in a half-time table behind Chelsea, Arsenal and Newcastle.

Chelsea were the best first-half team in 1996-97 but tended to drop points in the second half of matches and finished only sixth. If this was a weakness that Ruud Gullit identified he has certainly done something about it: this season Chelsea have shown the best second-half improvement of any side in the Premiership, finishing games with a total of five more points than they had in the first-half table.

Wimbledon, Southampton and Aston Villa have also performed appreciably better after their

half-time cuppa this season, earning four more points than they would have won after 45-minute games, while Derby, Crystal Palace and Tottenham have all "lost" four points during the second half of matches.

The ominous fact for any pretenders to Manchester United's crown is that Alex Ferguson's team nearly always step up the pace in the second half of the season as well as in the second half of matches.

The only Premiership season when United did not improve on their position after this stage of the season was when they were leading anyway in their 1993-94 championship campaign.

The half-time Premiership: 1997-98

(Positions after 90 minutes in brackets)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Arsenal (2)	14	6	8	0	19	6	26
2 Blackburn (3)	14	7	5	2	19	8	26
3 Derby (8)	13	7	3	3	13	8	24
4 Manchester United (1)	14	5	7	2	16	7	22
5 Leeds (5)	14	6	3	5	15	11	21
6 Chelsea (4)	13	4	8	1	14	6	20
7 Leicester (7)	14	4	8	2	7	5	20
8 Liverpool (6)	13	5	5	3	6	4	20
9 Crystal Palace (12)	13	5	5	3	7	8	20
10 Tottenham (16)	14	3	8	3	6	4	17
11 Coventry (11)	14	3	8	3	8	7	17
12 Newcastle (10)	11	3	7	1	8	8	16
13 Wimbledon (9)	14	2	9	5	5	6	15
14 West Ham (14)	13	3	5	5	4	8	14
15 Southampton (13)	14	2	6	6	6	11	12
16 Barnsley (20)	14	3	3	8	6	19	12
17 Everton (17)	13	2	5	6	5	10	11
18 Aston Villa (15)	14	2	5	7	5	12	11
19 Sheffield Wednesday (19)	14	2	5	7	11	21	11
20 Bolton (18)	13	2	5	6	5	15	11

The half-time Premiership: 1996-97

(Positions after 90 minutes in brackets)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Chelsea (5)	38	18	10	10	30	24	64
2 Arsenal (3)	38	16	15	7	25	12	63
3 Newcastle (2)	38	16	13	9	33	21	61
4 Manchester United (1)	38	15	15	8	31	24	60
5 Wimbledon (8)	38	15	13	10	22	18	58
6 Liverpool (4)	38	13	18	7	29	16	57
7 Everton (15)	38	15	12	11	27	21	57
8 Aston Villa (5)	38	12	19	7	18	15	55
9 Southampton (18)	38	12	11	15	22	28	47
10 Blackburn (13)	38	10	16	12	23	18	46
11 Nottingham Forest (20)	38	10	18	12	17	23	46
12 Leicester (9)	38	9	18	11	20	21	45
13 Sheffield Wednesday (7)	38	9	18	11	20	26	45
14 Tottenham (10)	38	9	16	13	22	25	43
15 Leeds (11)	38	8	19	11	12	17	43
16 Sunderland (18)	38	7	20	11	15	22	41
17 Derby (12)	38	6	22	10	18	21	40
18 Middlesbrough (19)	38	8	15	15	22	30	39
19 West Ham (14)	38	7	17	14	17	26	38
20 Coventry (17)	38	6	15	17	16	31	33

Manchester United after 14 games

Season	Position (final position)	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1992-93	7th (1st)	5	8	3	14	11	21
1993-94	1st (1st)	12	1	1	30	12	37
1994-95	2nd (2nd)	10	1	3	28	10	31
1995-96	2nd (1st)	10	2	2	31	13	32
1996-97	5th (1st)	6	5	3	26	21	23
1997-98	1st	8	4	2	31	10	28

Statistics: Brian Sears

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

		Home						Away						Form	Upcoming matches	
		P	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	(next 5 days)	
2	Arsenal	H	27	+15	5	2	0	18	3	2	4	1	12	2	WDDLW	29 Nov Liverpool (H); 6 Dec Newcastle (A); 13 Dec Blackburn (H); 23 Dec Wimbledon (H)
4	Chelsea	B	25	+13	4	0	1	10	6	4	1	3	9	10	LWLWW	28 Nov Everton (H); 29 Nov Derby (H); 6 Dec Tottenham (A); 13 Dec Leeds (H)
6	Liverpool	B	22	+12	5	0	1	18	5	1	4	2	7	8	WLWDW	29 Nov Arsenal (A); 6 Dec Man Utd (H); 13 Dec C Palace (A); 20 Dec Coventry (H)
8	Derby	B	20	+6	4	1	0	11	4	2	0	5	10	4	DDLWL	29 Nov Chelsea (A); 6 Dec West Ham (H); 14 Dec Bolton (A); 20 Dec Newcastle (A)
10	Newcastle	H	18	-1	4	2	1	10	8	1	1	2	4	7	WLDDD	29 Nov C Palace (A); 1 Dec Bolton (A); 6 Dec Arsenal (H); 13 Dec Barnsley (A)
12	C Palace	B	16	-2	0	3	3	4	9	4	1	2	9	6	DLDWD	Monday Tottenham (A); 29 Nov Newcastle (H); 3 Dec West Ham (A); 6 Dec Leicester (A)
14	West Ham	H	15	-4	4	0	1	10	4	1	1	6	7	17	WLWLL	29 Nov Aston Villa (H); 3 Dec C Palace (H); 6 Dec Derby (A); 13 Dec Sheffield Wed (H)
16	Tottenham	H	13	-10	3	2	2	7	7	0	2	5	4	4	LWLLL	Monday Crystal Palace (H); 29 Nov Everton (A); 6 Dec Chelsea (H); 13 Dec Coventry (A)
18	Bolton	B	12	-11	1	4	1	3	3	1	2	4	7	18	LLWDL	29 Nov Wimbledon (H); 1 Dec Newcastle (H); 6 Dec Blackburn (A); 14 Dec Derby (H)
20	Barnsley	H	10	-29	1	1	4	6	15	1	0	6	5	25	LLWLDL	29 Nov Leeds (H); 6 Dec Sheffield Wed (A); 13 Dec Blackburn (H); 20 Dec Tottenham (A)

Newcastle v Southampton

Leading scorer: Asprilla 6
Last season: 0-1

Stuart Pearce and Faustino Asprilla could both be back in the Newcastle team today. Asprilla is close to match fitness after a seven-week absence following a stomach operation, while Pearce, who has been out for almost three months with a hamstring injury, has trained successfully this week. Warren Barton (hamstring) is out. John Beresford and goalkeeper Shay Given are hoping to overcome groin and shoulder problems respectively. Southampton's Norwegian international striker Egil Olsenstad has recovered from surgery to an ankle injury that involved shaving bone from the joint, but will not play today. He played 45 minutes of a reserve team game against Luton in midweek, but manager Dave Jones does not want to risk too early a return. Central defender Claus Lundekvam (knee), striker David Hirst (hamstring) and midfielder Kevin Richardson (stomach) are doubts, but all may recover in time. Southampton will be looking for their seventh win in nine games, after losing to Chelsea in the Coca-Cola Cup in midweek.

Sheff Wed v Arsenal

Leading scorer: Di Canio, Carbone 7
Last season: 0-0

Ron Atkinson will play an unchanged side for his first match back as Wednesday manager. The team that won 5-0 against Bolton two weeks ago did not include Benito Carbone, then out with a foot injury, but he is likely to have a place on the bench today. Midfielder Mark Pemberton continues as a stand-in left-back, while Andy Booth, who scored a hat-trick against Bolton, will partner Paolo Di Canio up front. Atkinson will also be keeping Peter Atherton as captain for today's game. Arsenal will be without several key attacking players. Patrick Vieira is out for another two weeks with knee ligament damage while Emmanuel Petit and Dennis Bergkamp complete their three-match bans. Steve Bould is just beginning his suspension while Luis Boa Morte is on international duty with the Portuguese Under-21 squad. Nicolas Anelka is also out with an injured ankle to leave manager Arsène Wenger desperately short of forward options. Stephen Hughes has impressed recently but the youngster may be rested.

Wimbledon v Man Utd

Leading scorer: Cort 6
Last season: 0-3

Teenager Carl Cort and Marcus Gayle will be Wimbledon's attacking partnership as Joe Kinnear's options are limited by injuries. Forwards Efan Ekoku, Jason Euell and Jon Goodman are all out injured, as is defender Brian McAllister, who has a ruptured Achilles. Ekoku has the best chance of recovery for today, but it is unlikely. Left back Alan Kimble is back in the squad after being out for more than a month with a hamstring injury, while midfielder Robbie Earle is available again after returning from international duty with Jamaica. Gary Pallister is Manchester United's only doubt. He is back in light training but could miss his first Premiership start of the season after hurting his back in the 3-2 defeat at Arsenal. If Pallister is out make it, Ronny Johnsen could start his first game since October 4. Alex Ferguson will confirm his line-up today. Teddy Sheringham and Gary Neville, who both withdrew from last week's England squad, have responded to treatment and are fit.

Leeds v West Ham

Leading scorer: Wallace 9
Last season: 1-0

Gary Kelly is hoping to be fit for Leeds tomorrow. The Republic of Ireland international missed the midweek 3-2 home Coca-Cola Cup defeat against Reading with a knee injury picked up in his country's World Cup qualifying match in Belgium last week. Substitute goalkeeper Mark Beesley is out with a hamstring injury picked up in a midweek reserve game. Paul Robinson is likely to be on the bench as understudy to Nigel Martyn. Leeds will be without captain David Hopkin, who starts a three-match ban, and Harry Kewell, away on international duty with Australia. West Ham are still without Paul Kitson and Stan Lazaridis, but Andy Impey is close to returning after a foot injury, and Ludek Miklosko is fit enough again after injury to come into contention with Craig Forrest for the position of first choice goalkeeper. Harry Redknapp is likely to field an otherwise unchanged side from midweek, when the Hammers beat Walsall 4-1 in the Coca-Cola Cup and Frank Lampard Jr scored his first hat-trick at senior level.

FAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Rank	Team	Points	Goals	Red	Yellow	Pts Ave
1	G Wills	8	3	34	49	6.33
2	P Durkin	8	2	37	47	5.88
3	S Dunn	5	1	24	29	5.80
4	M Reed	5	1	23	28	5.60
5	G Kirby	7	1	30	35	5.00
6	J Winger	8	2	30	40	5.00
7	G Poll	9	3	30	45	5.00
8	G Barber	7	1	28	31	4.43
9	P Alcock	7	0	30	42	4.29
10	P Jones	7	2	19	28	4.34
11	D Ellery	7	1	23	29	4.00
12	M Bodenham	7	0	27	27	3.66
13	D Gallagher	8	2	19	29	3.63
14	M Riley	7	1	19	24	3.43
15	A Rennie	7	0	23	32	3.29
16	A Wilde	8	1	21	28	3.25
17	N Barry	7	0	20	22	2.88
18	K Burge	7	0	18	18	2.57
19	Lodge	8	0	15	15	1.89

Premiership matches only; Red cards: 1. Yellow: 1pt; Includes abandoned Derby-Wimbledon and West Ham-Crystal Palace matches



SPORT

Saturday 22 November 1997

All of England knows what to expect – defeat

It is, on the face of it, an unequal contest: a profoundly inexperienced England side against the finest All Black touring party to visit these shores in 30 years, perhaps ever. But Chris Hewett believes the red rose hierarchy can celebrate a victory of sorts this afternoon, even if New Zealand win the match by a distance.

You could take it as a sign of terminal desperation that England believe they can bring fresh reserves of strength and motivation to this afternoon's Test with New Zealand at Old Trafford by immersing themselves in the legends of Bobby Charlton and George Best. Charlton over-extended to be much of a scrummager, after all, and while Best was took part in more than his fair share of rucks during his years at the top, none of them had anything to do with rugby.

Yet Roger Uttley, the England manager, insists that the spiritual home of Manchester's unique sporting culture will inspire his callow charges to greater deeds than might otherwise have been imagined in the light of last weekend's half-baked mish-mash of a performance against Australia. The players will be hoping against hope that Uttley is right, for they need all the help they can get.

It is perfectly possible that the Manchester crowd will generate more atmosphere than the fed-and-watered Twickenham through produced last week – it would not be difficult – and an early English score would raise the roof. But Ireland managed early scores in Dublin last weekend and still had to suffer this magnificent All Black side scoring tries in their sleep as they secured a record 63-15 victory. Given the unpropitious circumstances, neither Uttley nor John Mitchell, the disconcertingly frank former All Black



OPPOSING WINGS

How New Zealand's Jonah Lomu and England's David Rees measure up

TALE OF THE TAPE

Lomu	Rees
22	23
6ft 5in	5ft 9in
17	1
17	0

Photographs: PA/Allsport



now in his second month as England's assistant coach, were remotely bullish about their chances of handing the tourists what would be only their second defeat in 20 Tests (they last lost to the Springboks in Johannesburg 15 months ago, having already won the series). "We're trying to change the mindset of English rugby and it will take time, so our focus is on performing with credibility in this

game rather than the outcome," admitted Mitchell.

"I can only be honest and say that we're going into this with trepidation. I played with and against a lot of the All Blacks in the current party and I have to say that in the three years I've been away from the New Zealand rugby scene, they've improved. They are now more comfortable with the tempo they were trying to develop at

the last World Cup and having watched them play against Emerging England on Tuesday night, I'd say they're the best All Blacks I've seen."

Um. We're not holding our collective breath for a night of Mancunian celebration, then. If Mitchell does not believe his side can win – and no one who saw him play for both Walsley and the All Blacks in 1993 would rush to brood him a

defeatist by instinct – the portents are gloomy indeed.

But while there was much sound reasoning behind this outburst of bleak realism – Mitchell agrees with the chief coach, Clive Woodward, that the ever-expanding volume of ooo-English players milling around the Allied Dunbar Premiership is undermining the very fabric of the game in this country – there are equally good grounds to believe that England will make a better fist of it than the Irish managed at Lansdowne Road.

To begin with, they are significantly stronger than the Irish in every area except the front row. Garath Archer had the temerity to mess the great John Eales around in the line-out at Twickenham last weekend, the back row unit has class stamped all over it and with Kyran Bracken mining a rich vein of form at scrum-half, England at least possess a launch pad. Provided they kick well – and that means both high and long, either on Christian

Cullen's head or over it – they can exert territorial pressure. Not even these All Blacks score that easily from their own 22.

And besides, Woodward's baby-boomer generation will take an enormous amount from the experience, irrespective of

the result. While the coaching team have been downplaying expectations at every available opportunity, the Mait, Perys and Tony Diprosos of this world have been talking with breathless excitement of giving Cullen something to think about or

putting Zinzan Brooke on his backside. Good on them.

With course, the odds are piled mountain-high in the faces of the home side. Quite how David Rees can even hope to stop a fully recovered, fully rejuvenated Jonah Lomu is anyone's guess and if Jasoo Leonard fails to galvanise Richard Cockerill and Darren Garforth into producing the games of their respective lives, the scrumage could well be a grisly sight. Honourable defeat, however, would give Woodward and Mitchell something to bite on.

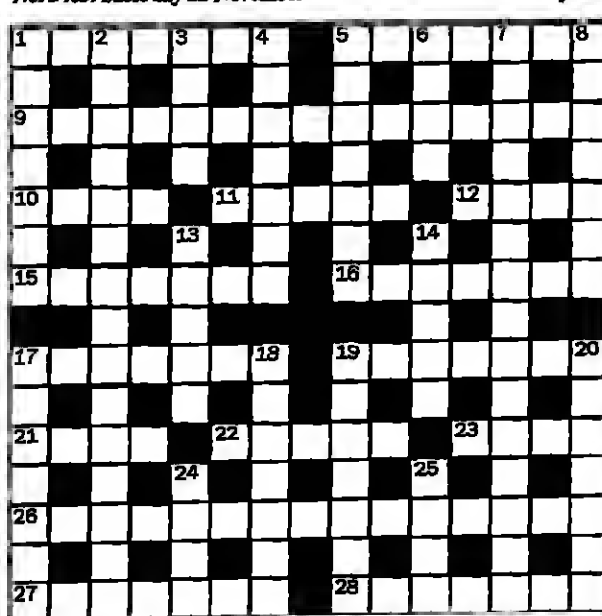
Three evenings ago, John Hart, the All Black coach, was enjoying a drink in the team hotel. "This may be a question too far, John," said an English journalist, "but if you were coaching us, could you work out a way of beating the All Blacks?" "Yes," he replied. "And before you ask it, your next question would be a question too far." Oh well, Clive. We tried our best.

Scotland v Australia, page 25

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3463, Saturday 22 November

By Mass



Friday's solution

Across: 1. STRIKE, long and wide-spread (7); 5. Red cardinal's not new in cultivation (7); 9. Breaking-point? (11,4); 10. Nothing reportedly chips this stone (4); 11. Spring, say, built into container (5); 12. Save Northern building (4); 15. Effort, time and money... (7); 16. ...got deal negotiated? So, exulted (7); 17. Knowing air about Mark in speech (7); 19. Strains fed by piano: they're practised (7); 21. A fish, one helping (4); 22. Discontinuation of state function (5); 23. Mariner inspired by Saint Nicholas? (4); 27. Coats with checks worn by English (7); 28. Creation of Man and Woman (7).

Last Saturday's solution

Across: 1. STRIKE, long and wide-spread (7); 5. Red cardinal's not new in cultivation (7); 9. Breaking-point? (11,4); 10. Nothing reportedly chips this stone (4); 11. Spring, say, built into container (5); 12. Save Northern building (4); 15. Effort, time and money... (7); 16. ...got deal negotiated? So, exulted (7); 17. Knowing air about Mark in speech (7); 19. Strains fed by piano: they're practised (7); 21. A fish, one helping (4); 22. Discontinuation of state function (5); 23. Mariner inspired by Saint Nicholas? (4); 27. Coats with checks worn by English (7); 28. Creation of Man and Woman (7).

ACROSS

- Strike, long and wide-spread (7)
- Red cardinal's not new in cultivation (7)
- Breaking-point? (11,4)
- Nothing reportedly chips this stone (4)
- Spring, say, built into container (5)
- Save Northern building (4)
- Effort, time and money... (7)
- ...got deal negotiated? So, exulted (7)
- Knowing air about Mark in speech (7)
- Strains fed by piano: they're practised (7)
- A fish, one helping (4)
- Discontinuation of state function (5)
- Mariner inspired by Saint Nicholas? (4)
- Coats with checks worn by English (7)
- Creation of Man and Woman (7)

DOWN

- Crack left in bond (7)
- A profitable line, once? (5,3,3,4)
- Bohemian topos group (4)
- Swing section mounting, audibly smooth (7)
- Having a go at a fence (7)
- Renounce last of army after retreat (4)
- Quality Southern properties (15)
- Saw resemblance in view outwardly misrepresented (7)
- Reduce one's rage (5)
- Wet and muddy, with lake drained (5)
- One who'll take a cig without right? (7)
- China mug is in a frame (7)
- Protecting Rook's lost, producing a result (7)
- Trains with players (7)
- Farm produce, prime cut (4)
- Effect of one in the face? (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL. Please see the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: J Armstrong, Wright, London NW11 5E; Loeby, Birmingham; N Fowler, Chelmsford; P Brown, Canterbury; A Becker, Blackburn.

ENGLAND v NEW ZEALAND

England	New Zealand
M Perry	at Old Trafford
D Rees	Bath 15
W Greenwood	Sale 14
P de Glanville	Leicester 13
A Adeboye	Bath 12
M Catt	A Ieremia
K Bracken	Welling
J Leonard	Welling
R Cockerill	Welling
D Garforth	Welling
M Johnson	Welling
G Archer	Welling
L Dallaglio	Welling
R Diprose	Welling
R Hill	Welling

Substitutions: 16 P Grayson (Northampton); 17 A Healey (Leicester); 18 G Rowntree (Leicester); 19 A Long (Bath); 20 D Greenwood (Leicester); 21 N Back (Leicester).
Referee: P Marshall (Australia).
Kick-off: 2.0 (Sky Sports 2).

CRICKET

MacLaurin prepared for satellite TV coverage of Tests

Lord's could be heading for conflict with fans if Lord MacLaurin has his way as he attempts to boost the game's finances. The chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board wants coverage of England's home Test matches to be put out to tender, with rights going to the highest bidder.

At present, subscription channels are not allowed to secure the live rights but, if the bidding was opened up, there would be a strong chance of the BBC being outbid by Sky, which already broadcasts live coverage of overseas Tests, one-day

matches and the Beesoo and Hedges Cup.

MacLaurin is intending to lobby government to have the existing regulations scrapped, so that cricket can follow football in capitalising fully on its marketability.

In an article in the *Financial Times*, MacLaurin said: "With more than £300m required to fund the first-class and recreational game, cricket is far from wealthy."

Manchester United Football Club have an annual income far in excess of the ECB's total budget.

"At a time when television has become the sport's prime source of revenue, all the ECB seeks is the right to strike a balance for cricket between exposure and revenue, as other sports governing bodies have shown it is both possible and vital to do."

The main objection to such a move could well come from fans. They could be obliged to pay for a subscription channel in order to continue to enjoy watching the game at the highest level. At present, all England's home international cricket can be seen for the price of the annual licence fee.

MacLaurin thinks removing such games from the list of protected, prime events would simply enable the ECB to negotiate a fair price for television rights. He suggested that matches like the Lord's Test could still be protected.

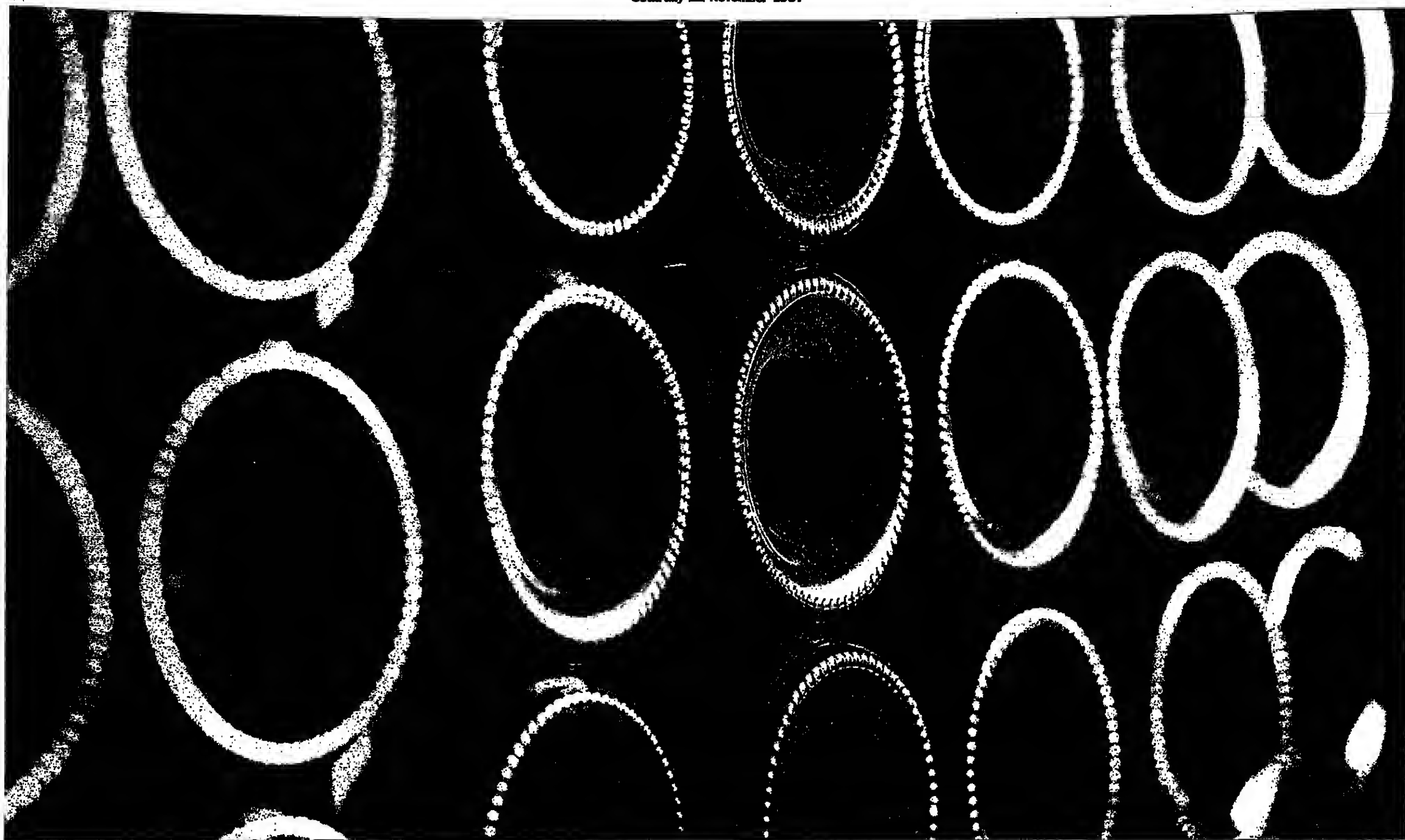
سكزا من الارجل



YOUR MONEY

PERSONAL FINANCE, PROPERTY & MOTORING

Saturday 22 November 1997



Stack 'em up: how El Vino in London keeps itself at the ready. For other ways to store wine, in quantities great and small, see Property on page 10.

Photograph: Philip Meech

Home hunter beware! Don't believe what you see

Home buyers all too often rely on surveyors to spot any costly defects and most have a touching faith in the honesty of sellers.

But buyers should beware of the tricks of the would-be sellers and be warned that the law is not always an effective remedy. Surveyors, as Ginevra Vedrickas discovers, are getting wise to the tricks as these cautionary tales prove:

Your prospective buyers are due. You throw everything under the bed, put some coffee on and plump up the cushions. This is perfectly acceptable behaviour when trying to sell your home. But some vendors go a lot further.

Rohin Scott describes his attempts to sell his home in Brighton: "A gaping crack ran from the cellar to the roof. In the 24 hours before the survey I filled, painted and rubbed dirt

on the downstairs crack to age it. I even made curry for breakfast to mask the smell of paint.

"The surveyor missed it and said that had I filled and painted upstairs as well nobody would have noticed."

When his first sale collapsed, Mr Scott took the surveyor's advice and, after an unproblematic survey, his house is again under offer.

Buyers may believe that all problems show up in the surveyor's report, especially if they commission an independent survey rather than relying on the bank or building society's surveyor, who carries out a survey for the lender's eyes only to establish that the loan is justified. David Parkin, a chartered surveyor for more than 10 years, is more cynical. "If you went to your doctor for a check-up they'd ask you to take your clothes off. Our job is like examining someone who is wearing an overcoat."

They are learning to spot the obvious stunts such as the paint-disguising curry or indeed the spot the chickeny perpetrated by Michael Atkinson. His "patient" was on the crit-

cal list. Trying to sell his two-up two-down in Peckham forced him to take desperate measures after his first buyers pulled out when the surveyor's report showed problems: "A wooden addition to the back of the house was about to collapse. The estate agent said someone else was coming to view and I panicked. I didn't have any wood so I chopped the for-sale sign down and used it to replace

'We took down the dartboard and found lots of holes in the wall. We filled them with toothpaste and the room smelled lovely'

one of the rotten posts. The buyer loved the house and knew nothing of the miracle cure."

Most house vendors admit to impromptu, yet minor, deceptions. "We played a lot of darts. On moving day we took the dartboard down and found hundreds of holes in the wall. We filled them with tooth-

paste, it looked great and the room smelled lovely," Simon Matthews says.

Estate agents are not obliged to look for defects in the properties they are asked to sell. They prefer to believe the best of vendors. Stephen Smith, manager of Bushells in Dulwich, says: "If you're selling a car you clean it up and make it look its best. It is the same with a house." He explains his role:

"We act for the vendor and don't ask questions. It sounds awful but we don't want to know - 99.9 per cent of our clients are honourable and, after all, buying property is very much caveat emptor [let the buyer beware]."

Even a wary buyer can be misled. Vendors are nowadays

legally obliged to complete preliminary enquiries where they give information on all aspects of their house, including questions about neighbour disputes.

Caroline Sherry, senior conveyancing solicitor at the London firm of Glazer Delmar, believes most people are honest but recalls a client who hated his oozy flat so decided to buy a peaceful-looking hangar. "The seller stated that there had been no trouble with neighbours. My client moved in and found they were notorious in the area. They tipped rubbish everywhere, graffitied on adjoining walls and had parties until 3am."

He could have sued the vendor, although case law is rare in this area, but has chosen instead to try to sell. "Most people can't be bothered to sue as the process is so long-winded. You may get compensation but you would still be stuck with the problem," Ms Sherry says.

Her client's future responses to preliminary enquiries will be between him and his conscience, and admitting to a problem could scare off buyers.

"You are legally obliged to be truthful. If you take a calculated risk, you may be sued," Ms Sherry warns.

One vendor who took that risk dashed buyer Luisa Pazienti's hopes of a beautiful family home for herself, partner Julian and baby Martha.

"We liked the house mainly because of the garden. When we asked the vendors about the adjoining building, they said it was an electrical warehouse so we thought no more of it. We'd seen an old sign there so it seemed to fit. The day after we moved in we woke to the most disgusting smell of fumes."

Ms Pazienti did not know they could sue but battled in-

stead to get something done about what turned out to be a motorcycle helmet spraying factory behind their home. "It ruined two years of our time here."

"Every time we smelt fumes we had to ring up the council and there was this pathetic traipsing through our house so that they could witness it. I found it very traumatic."

The family suffered from sore throats and headaches and were angry about the deceit. "Neighbours told me that the previous owners knew, so basically they told us a lie. This upset me as they knew we had a baby. I'd go into Martha's bedroom, smelt fumes and

get completely hysterical."

Two years on, the factory no longer sprays paint. Martha plays with her sister, Georgia, in the garden and sleeps undisturbed by fumes. "We're happy now but we've learned a lesson and will be more careful next time," Ms Pazienti says.

Think you smell a rat when viewing that perfect property? If it turns out to be curry, paint or even toothpaste, then beware. Before buying, make impromptu visits at different times of day, don't just rely on the survey and talk to neighbours.

Caroline Sherry, Glazer Delmar, 0171-639 8801; Bushells, 0181-299 1722.

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UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/ 'GIRL POWER' PEP

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Family is making PEPs accessible to 9 million investors who can save just £10 a month. Charges are low, shaving off just 2.4 per cent a year from investment growth. The slightly cheeky title, Girl Power PEP, is because savers can stop and start without penalty, meaning they are not penalised for a career break.

Drawbacks and risks: The minimum monthly payment is the lowest around. Charges, however, are not the lowest available. Charges do not matter if Family's investment vehicle, the Family Balanced Unit Trust, grows by enough. If you believe Family can make your money grow as fast

as top-performing investment managers, such as Perpetual, where the minimum saving is £20 a month, buy this. But if Perpetual beats Family's investment record it may well be worth paying the higher charges. Family claims it has stayed in the top quartile of fund managers over one, two and three years. James Bruce, of Colchester-based Corporate and Personal Planning, disputes this, ranking it in the third quartile of fund managers over one and two years. Verdict: Should be popular, though the Spice Girls probably won't bother. Marks out of 10: Four.

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2/PERSONAL FINANCE

CLIFFORD
GERMAN

Brown must tread carefully

The shake-out on the stock market in the past few weeks has inevitably had a dampening effect on investor confidence. It would be worrying if it had not. Shares and other investments linked in the stock market are actually 10 per cent cheaper now than they were at the beginning of October but investors will not want to buy heavily until they are reasonably certain the shake-out has ended, and that is not yet clear.

Another reason why investors are pausing for reflection is the possible effects of the Chancellor's pre-Budget review on taxation policy on Tuesday. Financial advisers have been encouraging clients to buy personal equity plans, realise capital gains, change wills, transfer assets to children and set up trusts to shelter their assets against inheritance tax in case Gordon Brown makes it more difficult and less tax-effective from Tuesday. But the natural reaction of most investors will have been to wait and see rather than try and second-guess the Chancellor.

He may well announce plans to reform capital gains tax and inheritance tax to try and make them more productive as taxes, in sharp contrast to John Major's government, which seemed ready to abolish both taxes, but never actually got round to doing so.

CGT is a complex tax, and a move to a simpler system, perhaps abolishing indexation in favour of exempting gains made over longer periods of time, would be widely welcomed but it is likely to be balanced by tighter rules on short-term gains.

Inheritance tax has become almost a voluntary tax thanks to the regular increases in the starting point to the current level of £215,000 and the concession allowing life-time gifts to escape the net altogether if the donor survived for seven years could well be tightened up. The starting point could also be reduced if the starting rate of 40 per cent is cut. But it could be a risky move to tinker with the rule which

exempts all assets left to surviving spouses in the UK.

These are not the only areas where reform is needed. The rules on pension contributions are complicated and clearly work against the urgent need to encourage individuals to contribute more to pension provisions.

Individuals need to know how existing pension schemes will sit alongside the promised stakeholder and citizen pension plans. But consultation is still taking place and it could be two years before they are up and running.

Hopefully Mr Brown will see the need to clarify the relationship and reduce the risk of creating uncertainty which could discourage contributions in existing pension plans. He would be taking a real risk of inhibiting contributions if, after reducing tax relief on pension funds in July, he tries on Tuesday to reduce tax relief on individual pension contributions across the board with immediate effect. He may well, however, be tempted to restrict tax relief on pension contributions to the standard rate of tax.

The prospect of changes in tax concessions on savings when the individual savings accounts are introduced in 1999 is already discouraging demand for PEPs and Tesas. Although providers and advisers have naturally been trying to persuade investors to buy while stocks last, on the grounds that the tax breaks on the ISA will be less attractive, investors will be reluctant to buy more PEPs until they know whether there will be a fixed limit on the total tax-free savings individuals can hold, which might mean large PEP investors lose tax relief on their excess holdings.

The trick next week is to banish uncertainty even though new rules are not ready to introduce. If Mr Brown can do that the financial services providers and advisers can look forward to another bumper sales season next spring. If he fails he could damage the industry materially.

MONEY MAKEOVER

Get the pension sorted - and buy a large diary

Names: Chris and Rebecca Leftley.
Ages: 45 and 31.

Family: They have a boy of three and Rebecca is expecting a baby in March next year.
Occupations: College librarian and market researcher.

Financial issues: Chris and Rebecca are comfortably off. They live in college accommodation and rent out a house they own in Oxfordshire which they have just had valued at £90,000.

Chris has been offered a job in Fiji with a three-year contract. The pay is good by local standards but less than he is getting in the UK. Rebecca will stop working before the baby arrives and may well not find a suitable job in Fiji.

If they sell the house before they go, they could expect to make a profit of £10,000 to £12,000 to add to their current savings and give them around £25,000 in investment.

But when they return to the UK in three years' time, they would have no home in return.

If they keep on renting out the house, they would have a home to come back to, but they would not have as big a lump sum to invest.

Chris reckons, on past experience, they would need to set aside £5,000 to meet contingencies, which would reduce the sum they could invest to around £20,000. Which way should they play it?

The adviser: Michael Bell is the principal of Michael Bell & Co, a firm of independent financial advisers based at 7 High Street, Drayton, Abingdon in Oxfordshire (01235 531388). The advice: The opportunity to spend three years on a tropical island is a dream come true. However, there are always practical considerations which get in the way.

Although your pay will be good by local standards, you will have a shortfall of UK national insurance contributions while working overseas which would affect your pension entitlements, unless on your return, within six years, you can



The Leftleys will live in Fiji for three years but want to make sure they have something to come back to. Photograph: John Lawrence.

make Class 3 voluntary contributions to restore your state pension entitlement.

Both your own and your current employer's pension contributions will be suspended after December.

The pension company will allow you to hold existing funds in your name and you will be able to recommence contributions once you are earning and paying UK taxes.

A contribution now could be considered as money paid in lieu of contributions to be missed over the next three years. Alternatively, you could make regular contributions to a personal international pension arrangement.

A suitable medical expenses plan offering world-wide cover is essential. You will need to investigate the availability, suitability and cost of obtaining NHS/Social Security benefits locally.

With a young son and a baby due in March, sound local medical facilities are vital. After this, pre-school facilities and your son's educational requirements will be uppermost in your mind.

Your remuneration will not be subject to UK taxes but you will be taxed locally. Housing: As you are likely to return in three years, I suggest retaining the Oxfordshire property. House prices have increased recently and a sale now could result in having to pay more than expected when you return. You may wish to consider having your property professionally valued prior to your departure and upon your return, as there is potential for capital gains tax liability.

Retaining the property has the advantage of "saving" agency and legal fees. Future buying costs are likely to include stamp duty, too. A good letting agent is vital while you are so far away. Happily, you are already familiar with letting procedures and this locality is well sought after by tenants.

The Inland Revenue can provide a very useful leaflet, IR140, *Non-resident landlords, their agents and tenants*, telling you about tax and

the UK rental income of non-resident landlords.

It describes the tax obligations of landlords, letting agents and tenants. Non-resident landlords can apply to the Inland Revenue's Financial Intermediaries and Claims Office (FICO) for approval to receive their rental income with no tax deducted.

Once rents are received and outgoings are allowed for, you are currently breaking even. Your mortgage is on an interest-only basis, supported by monthly personal equity plan contributions. I suggest changing this to a capital and interest basis as PEP contributions will not be permitted while you are overseas.

Selling the property and investing the surplus funds means you are investing your future house purchase deposit.

As a minimum benchmark, the investment must keep pace with any house price inflation. There is a risk that investment under-performance could jeopardise your future house purchase.

It is very likely that your four-year fixed-interest rate mortgage has an early redemption penalty, which would only add to your costs.

Investment: Details of your existing arrangements, tax situation and perceived attitude to risk are essential before making firm recommendations.

You will be liable to UK income tax if your UK income, after allowable expenses, exceeds personal allowances. Inland Revenue leaflet IR138, *Living or retiring abroad*, will be useful in this respect.

Your £5,000 contingency fund needs to be held on deposit with reasonable access. It is possible to secure a deposit-bearing account with direct debit/standing order facilities to meet regular commitments.

With the £5,000 mentioned above earning deposit interest, you have £5,000 (less any pension contribution) to be invested to maintain a balance between risk and reward.

I recommend making use of your personal

equity plan allowances. While the full taxation advantages may not apply, PEP plans can provide a more economic means of buying and holding collective equity investments.

You can continue to invest in and retain your PEP prior to your departure but not once you are living abroad.

Chris should consider topping up his PEP before departure. The family investment portfolio would also benefit from diversification by Rebecca investing in her own PEP using another plan manager and a different investment sector.

In the recent budget it was announced that Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) seem likely to either replace or encompass PEPs and Tesas from April 1999.

No rules have been announced to date. Once ISAs are launched we can consider whether it will be beneficial to switch existing investments into this new product. Meanwhile PEPs continue to offer highly beneficial tax-free investment and it makes sense to take full advantage in the time remaining.

With some exceptions, there is no capital gains tax in Fiji.

Income from interest, dividends, etc, is not subject to tax where someone from outside is in employment under a contract of not more than three years.

Depending on the rates offered, this might influence your local savings and investment arrangements but be sure to check on the provider's security before investing.

With all the excitement of planning for a new life, it is easy to forget that things can, and do, go wrong. This is an opportunity to review your need to provide essential protection for all the family.

If you are to hold property in your new place of residence, you should consider making a foreign will for foreign property.

Finally, you will need a good size 1998-2000 diary to make holiday bookings for all your family and friends. Bon voyage!

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Scottish Widows	£12.45	Legal & General	£19.10
Legal & General	£12.60	Scottish Widows	£19.60
Marks and Spencer	£15.65	Marks and Spencer	£22.55

WOMEN (NON SMOKER)

Age 30		Age 35	
Eagle Star	£8.83	Eagle Star	£11.89
Legal & General	£9.30	Legal & General	£12.30
Scottish Widows	£10.00*	Scottish Widows	£13.55
Marks and Spencer	£10.45	Marks and Spencer	£13.75

Age next birthday. Sample monthly premium rates only.
Source: Company's Illustration (The Exchange 10th/11th Nov 97).
* £10.00 minimum premium gives cover of £103,896



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Cash in early issues of 'granny bonds'

Investors are still not sure whether the next move in interest rates will be upwards but the upward tick in the rate of inflation has certainly increased the appeal of index-linked national savings certificates.

The 11th issue, which went on sale this summer, pays 2.75 per cent on top of the current rate of inflation as measured by the retail price index, provided they are held for five years. The interest is free of income tax and the capital is also indexed against inflation.

Unlike index-linked gilt-edged stocks, which are indexed to the rate of inflation eight months in arrears, index-linked savings certificates are indexed to the latest inflation figure available at the start of each sales month.

Until 30 November that is the September figure published in October. From 1 December it will be the October figure released earlier this month.

The previous issue pays only inflation plus 2.5 per cent. But it is not really worth the while of people who bought the earlier issue switching now because the published premium on top of inflation is an average rate which is only reached in the fifth and final year.

The premium is lowest in the first year and is highest in the fifth and final year. But it does pay to cash in

earlier issues of index-linked certificates which have already reached maturity because they then earn only the so-called extension rate, and the ongoing interest is only indexed with no premium above the retail price index.

So if you have a set of old certificates tucked away in the bureau, look them out now, take them in to the post office and ask to have them reinvested in the current issue.

The first issues, of course, were available only to pensioners, hence the popular name of 'granny bonds', and even now 70 per cent are bought by the over 55s and only 5 per cent by the under 35s.

— Clifford German

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3/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997

COLLECT TO INVEST

At this price, it needs pluck

Guitars are the loners of the musical industry. If they haven't been hurtled over footlights, they've been abandoned under a bed by an amateur with blistered fingers. But, as John Windsor reports, these mistreated instruments are now in demand as investments.

Bonhams held its first guitars-only auction in June, the only one in London, and its second is next Thursday (11am). Saleroom debuts dedicated to a single commodity are instructive market-makers: they tend to go either through the roof or the floor. Among stringed instruments, the auction market for guitars is the rawest and most capricious.

Whereas violins, especially well-used and cared-for concert and music-school instruments in the £1,000-£10,000 range, sell at auction in their hundreds, guitars are mainly solo instruments. You never quite know where they've been.

Most change hands in private deals or are sold by dealers in shops or at fairs, where buyers who intend playing them can question the vendors. It is only collectable "association" guitars that belong to pop stars that sell best at auction.

That Fender Stratocaster may be shattered, but at least you can read in the catalogue that Jimi Hendrix shattered it. As it happened, Bonhams' first guitar sale flopped. Of the 125 lots, only 33 sold. In an established market, an auctioneer turning in such a disastrous result would resign. But Bonhams' Jim Westbrook, a 38-year-old guitar teacher with 50 pupils in Brighton who had pitched Bonhams the idea of guitar sales, is undeterred, even chipper. He is building up a database of his target market - guitar players and teachers. They showed up in disappointingly small numbers in June. The sale was packed with

bargain-hunting dealers, who were baulked by his bullish reserves, and by trendy young voyeurs, some unable to tell an electric Gibson from a classical Hauser at 20 paces. Several classical guitars by living makers, having failed to sell in the first sale, are back in next week's, this time with more modest estimates. This is the soft underbelly of the guitar market.

So why join a waiting list for new ones or pay a retail dealer top whack? Snap them up before more buyers enter the market. A classical guitar made in 1986 by Edward Jones of Oxford, who started his career making harpsichords and signs himself "luthier" on the label, failed to sell at an estimated £1,100.

duras rosewood with mosaic butterfly decoration, was unwanted at £1,000-£1,500 last time round. Now it is £800-£1,000. Likely shop price: £1,800. Appearing for the first time at auction: a 1990 classical guitar by David Whiteman of Brighton. He learned guitar-making at the old

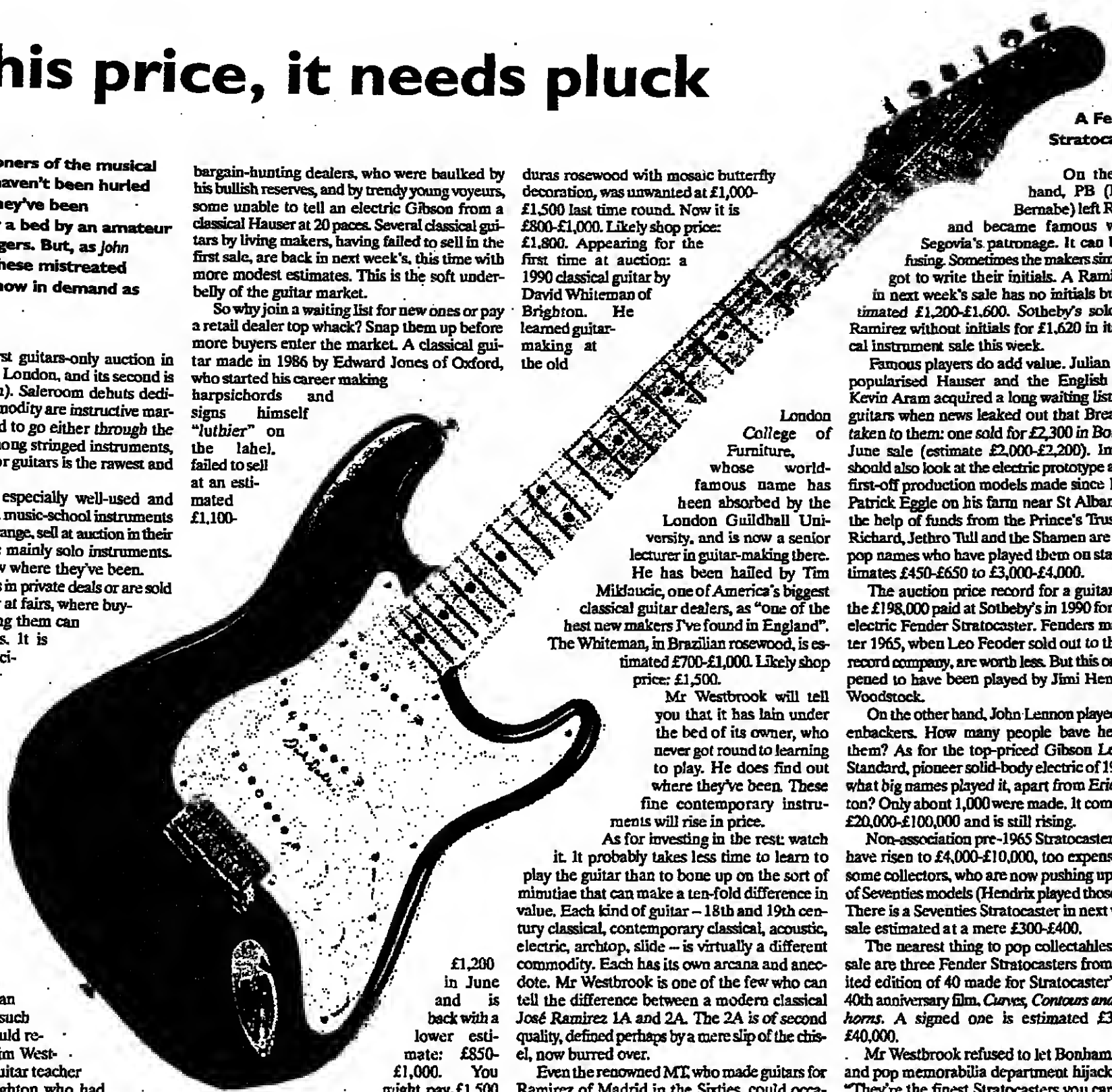
London College of Furniture, whose world-famous name has been absorbed by the London Guildhall University, and is now a senior lecturer in guitar-making there. He has been hailed by Tim Minkus, one of America's biggest classical guitar dealers, as "one of the best new makers I've found in England". The Whiteman, in Brazilian rosewood, is estimated £700-£1,000. Likely shop price: £1,500.

Mr Westbrook will tell you that it has lain under the bed of its owner, who never got round to learning to play. He does find out where they've been. These fine contemporary instruments will rise in price.

As for investing in the rest: watch it. It probably takes less time to learn to play the guitar than to bone up on the sort of minutiae that can make a ten-fold difference in value. Each kind of guitar - 18th and 19th century classical, contemporary classical, acoustic, electric, archtop, slide - is virtually a different commodity. Each has its own arcana and anecdote. Mr Westbrook is one of the few who can tell the difference between a modern classical José Ramirez 1A and 2A. The 2A is of second quality, defined perhaps by a mere slip of the chisel, now burred over.

Even the renowned MT, who made guitars for Ramirez of Madrid in the Sixties, could occasionally turn out a 2A. But if you know that Segovia favoured guitars made by MT - that's Mariano Tezanos Castro, to aficionados - then you will not be put off if you find his initials written inside a guitar said to be by Ramirez.

£1,200 in June and is back with a lower estimate: £850-£1,000. You might pay £1,500 in a shop for this fine specimen in prized Brazilian rosewood. Try it out at one of the pre-sale views. A 1984 classical guitar by the London maker Trevor Semple, in Hon-



A Fender Stratocaster

On the other hand, PB (Paulino Bernabe) left Ramirez and became famous without Segovia's patronage. It can be confusing. Sometimes the makers simply forgot to write their initials. A Ramirez 1A in next week's sale has no initials but is estimated £1,200-£1,600. Sotheby's sold a 1A Ramirez without initials for £1,620 in its musical instrument sale this week.

Famous players do add value. Julian Bream popularised Hauser and the English maker Kevin Aram acquired a long waiting list for his guitars when news leaked out that Bream had taken to them: one sold for £2,300 in Bonhams' June sale (estimate £2,000-£2,200). Investors should also look at the electric prototype and two first-off production models made since 1989 by Patrick Eggle on his farm near St Albans, with the help of funds from the Prince's Trust. Cliff Richard, Jethro Tull and the Shamen are among pop names who have played them on stage. Estimates £450-£650 to £3,000-£4,000.

The auction price record for a guitar is still the £198,000 paid at Sotheby's in 1990 for a 1968 electric Fender Stratocaster. Fenders made after 1965, when Leo Fender sold out to the CBS record company, are worth less. But this one happened to have been played by Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock.

On the other hand, John Lennon played Rick- enbackers. How many people have heard of them? As for the top-priced Gibson Les Paul Standard, pioneer solid-body electric of 1958-60, what big names played it, apart from Eric Clapton? Only about 1,000 were made. It commands £20,000-£100,000 and is still rising.

Non-association pre-1965 Stratocaster prices have risen to £4,000-£10,000, too expensive for some collectors, who are now pushing up prices of Seventies models (Hendrix played those, too). There is a Seventies Stratocaster in next week's sale estimated at a mere £300-£400.

The nearest thing to pop collectables in the sale are three Fender Stratocasters from a limited edition of 40 made for Stratocaster's 1954 40th anniversary film, *Claves, Contours and Body-horns*. A signed one is estimated £30,000-£40,000.

Mr Westbrook refused to let Bonhams' rock and pop memorabilia department hijack them. "They're the finest Stratocasters you can buy," he said.

Bonhams Fine and Rare Guitars, Thursday, 11am. Viewing from tomorrow, 11am. Jim Westbrook, phone 01273 328 118.

INTERNET INVESTOR



ROBIN AMLÖT

PC games are a serious business

You have this beige, maybe battleship grey, box sitting in a corner of the room. Probably in the bedroom, maybe the dining room. Perhaps it was bought for the kids on the grounds that a PC was a serious machine and, therefore, of more educational value than a games console.

Be honest, what does it get used for? Does anybody seriously archive their recipes? Maybe the home accounts and some homework but mostly it's games, isn't it? And why not?

The games industry, as it stands today, consists of two major sectors: the video games market and the computer games market.

The video games market is dominated by proprietary standards. The average PC now has much more power than the average games console and the quality of the games available is, at last, starting to reflect this fact.

The computer games software market will continue to grow in line with growth in PC penetration into the home. The UK installed base of games-capable PCs in the home is now probably about 2 million but that number is expected to double over the next two years.

"Invest in what you know" is, I think, one of US arch-investment pundit Warren Buffett's dictums.

So, put the prospective growth of PC gaming as a marketplace alongside the fact that there are now several companies listed on the London Stock Exchange or the Alternative Investment Market that derive some or all of their revenue from activities in the games market.

The conclusion is that no longer need you feel guilty about sneaking away to the computer to indulge in politically unsound digital mass mayhem. It is merely research into a potential investment opportunity.

So, while ducking, diving, hawking away and problem-solving, which games companies should you be taking a second look at?

Among developers, the companies that actually design and create games, those publicly quoted in the UK are Rage Software, Inner Workings and Digital Animations.

There are also three specialist software publishers, responsible for the overall management of a game's development, which are listed:

Eidos, Gremlin and SCL. Distribution tends to be the province of specialist distributors or the publishers themselves.

The sole listed UK distributor is Prism Leisure while, at the retail end of the chain, the sole listed UK games retail chain is Electronics Boutique.

Durlacher Research, sister company to investment firm Durlacher Ltd, broker to Rage Software, has set up a new free-access website aimed at existing and potential investors in UK games companies.

The company has already produced two reports on the games industry and publishes a regular review of business developments on the Internet, the Durlacher Quarterly Internet Report.

Nick Gibson, Durlacher's games analyst, says: "It is clear that many technology companies and the industries they operate in are poorly understood."

"This is true of the games sector where the terms CD-ROM and multimedia tend to conjure up images of failed start-ups and plummeting share prices. Yet this image is frequently applied to the games industry, a proven and currently booming sector."

The website aims to clear away some of the confusion surrounding the games industry and the companies that work within it.

The site is divided into four main areas: a historical overview of the games industry with comments on the major trends of the past four years; the making of a games title and how companies make their money; analysis of the most important publicly quoted games development and publishing companies; and a glossary of terms used on the site.

What the website does not do is offer in-depth financial analyses of the companies but it does feature the latest consensus earnings estimates where possible. It also attempts analysis of the product and brand positioning, highlighting the key strengths and weaknesses of the companies concerned.

By the way, who did decide that you could have a PC in any colour you like as long as it was beige or grey?

Games Investor:
www.durlacher.com/games investor/

BARGAIN BASEMENT

Leeds & Holbeck Building Society will raise rates on some of its investment accounts next week. Rates on the Albion 30 postal account will rise by up to 0.55 per cent with investments of £10,000 to £24,999 earning 7.4 per cent gross and investments of £150,000 earning 8.10 per cent gross. Call 0500 225777.

Alliance & Leicester has put together a package of unsecured loans in the run-up to Christmas. The rate for loans from £12,500 to £15,000 has been reduced from 12.7 per cent APR to 11.5 per cent APR while the rate for £5,000 to £12,499 is 13.3

per cent APR and the rate for £25,000 to £4,999 is 14.8 per cent APR. Call 0990 626262.

Britannia Building Society is launching four mortgages next week. The two-year discount rate is 6.35 per cent fee-free, two, four and 10-year fixed-rate mortgages are at 5.74 per cent, 6.74 per cent and 7.49 per cent, plus Britannia's members' loyalty bonus scheme and 12 months' free unemployment cover. Borrowers wanting to secure their mortgage payments for a shorter time can lock into rates as low as 5.74 per cent for a full two years. Contact branches.

Baronworth Investment Services offers a one-year guaranteed bond combined with a with-profits bond to yield 10.33 per cent tax-free. Minimum investment is £10,000 and half will be invested in a one-year guaranteed bond with Pinnacle Insurance while the remainder will be invested in a with-profits bond of the customer's choice. Call 0181-518 1218.

Coventry Building Society has launched a five-year fixed-rate mortgage set at 6.5 per cent with an arrangement fee of £295 and a capped-rate mortgage set at 7.5 per cent with no arrangement fee and a cash-

back of £400. Both are available for loans up to 95 per cent of the purchase price. Borrowers will qualify for the society's privilege rate after March 2003. Contact branches.

Woolwich Building Society is introducing two-year fixed-rate mortgages starting at 4.99 per cent for a maximum loan of 95 per cent LTV. The application fee is £350 and Woolwich Homewise insurance must be taken. Five-year fixes start at 6.69 per cent with the same restrictions. Contact branches.

Time is running out for people who want to obtain the fifth edi-

tion of the Chartwell With Profit Bond Guide. To receive a copy, call 01225 446 556.

Skipton Building Society is raising the rate on its base rate tracker account, the third rise since its launch in July. Minimum investment is £5,000 and interest rates vary between 7.25 per cent gross on balances up to £24,999 and 7.5 per cent gross on balances over £25,000. Call 0800 446776.

The David Aaron Partnership and GE Financial Assurance are offering a new flexible access bond. This is an instant-access postal account which

offers a rate of 6.10 per cent net of basic-rate tax. GE Financial Assurance is part of GE Capital of America, the largest publicly quoted company in the world as measured by market capitalisation. Call the David Aaron Partnership on 01908 281544.

BES Investment publishes a magazine, *BES PEP*, that opens up the world of PEP investment to first-time savers. The free magazine provides advice on which plans to invest in and which ones to avoid as well as general background information. For a copy, call 0990 112255.

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4/PERSONAL FINANCE



BRIAN TORA

Everyone is waiting to see who the next victim of globalisation will be

There was an inevitability about the bid for Mercury Asset Management that should, with the benefit of hindsight, have seen arbitrageurs building their stakes in the company. Just a few days earlier the noble Liechtenstein owners of LGT put the fund manager up for sale.

At £40bn of funds under management, this previously British company is less than half MAM's size, but no small player either. Yet the reason for the sale was given as the globalisation of the fund management industry. It seems in the view of the owners, LGT was too small to survive by itself.

In a comparatively short space of time a large number of seemingly impregnable British financial institutions have fallen to foreign predators - all in the cause of globalisation.

Warburgs is now part of Swiss Bank Corporation, Kleinwort's of Dresdner Bank. Morgan Grenfell fell to Deutsche Bank some years back, but perhaps that just shows the prescience of Germany's leading bank.

The deals have come thick and fast recently. The acquisition of BA Financial Services, which includes such household names as Allied Dunbar and Eagle Star in the UK, by Swiss insurance giant Zurich, has also created a major multinational fund management force.

It seems these days that big really is beautiful.

Naturally enough, speculation is now rife on who will be the next to fall. The trouble is that most of the players in the UK are simply not big enough to interest the likes of the major US houses. The MAM deal puts Merrill firmly in the No 2 position in the world, behind Fidelity of America.

Consolidation in the US has been taking place already and some domestic companies, such as Invesco, the fund management group that has its origins in the old Slater Walker investment banking business, have turned their attentions to the other side of the Atlantic as the only way of achieving the size that many perceive now to be necessary to



There are always many willing to recruit, Nicola Horlick among them

win the major institutional mandates that are so highly sought after.

The investment clout that these institutional funds provide can allow the development of retail products, which both adds to and benefits from the public perception of the fund management operation. And it does no harm to have your most senior fired manager dubbed the most powerful woman in Britain either.

In practice it is very difficult to spot the next takeover victim. Few would have expected MAM to be a willing target - but this is an agreed bid from America's most powerful brokerage house.

Fund management is, after all, a people business. The assets Merrill Lynch are buying are principally individuals, people well skilled in winning and retaining investment portfolios.

Make a mess of managing a business like that and your expensively acquired assets walk out the door. There are al-

ways many willing to recruit, not least being Nicola Horlick, who was herself once at Mercury.

If investment attention is firmly focused on domestic players in investment management, it can only be because the Far East is being studiously ignored by managers in London at present.

If it had not been for the US brokers' largesse in London, I would have been writing about Japan.

The market there has been plunging up and down in a fashion that should be a comedy writer's delight. First economic measures are badly received, then a bank goes bust - and shares rise.

Then worries filter through that the authorities might just bail out the beleaguered financial sector - leading to a sharp downward correction. And, of course, in the end buyers start bargain hunting - up we go again.

Except, of course, it is not really the end. What the final act will usher in for the market that was once bigger even than Wall Street is hard to gauge.

Most foreign investors are sitting on the sidelines, either having withdrawn from an investment area where damage has been meted out on both the currency and share front, or wishing fervently that they had the foresightedness to have withdrawn, as Templeton did back in the late 1980s.

Deregulation looks more of a reality now, but the financial sector, and the economy for that matter, is in a mess.

Just over the sea, another major local economy is also suffering from the aftershocks that have travelled around the region.

Korea is fortunately trying to tough it out. Quite whether the IMF would be able to bail out an economy that is comprehensively bigger than most of the other so-called Tigers in the region put together is a moot point.

In the meantime it looks a "won-way" ticket to nowhere.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Investment Strategy Committee of stockbrokers Greig Middleton.

BEST BORROWING RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max. adv. %	For	Incentive
MORTGAGES				
FIXED RATE				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATE				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATE				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATE				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS				
CONSUMER				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
OVERDRAFTS				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
CREDIT CARDS				
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 10 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 15 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 20 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 25 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	5.5% 30 years	5.5%	£100,000	£1,000

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Incentive
INSTANT ACCESS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Instant Access	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Notice Account	1 month	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Notice Account	3 months	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Notice Account	6 months	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Notice Account	12 months	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Bond	1 year	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Bond	2 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Bond	3 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Bond	4 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Bond	5 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Cheque Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Cheque Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Cheque Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Cheque Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Cheque Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
FIXED RATE BONDS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Fixed Rate Bond	1 year	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Fixed Rate Bond	2 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Fixed Rate Bond	3 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Fixed Rate Bond	4 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Fixed Rate Bond	5 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
FIRST TESSAS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	First Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	First Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	First Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	First Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	First Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Follow-on Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Follow-on Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Follow-on Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Follow-on Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Follow-on Tessa	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Guaranteed Income Bond	1 year	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Guaranteed Income Bond	2 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Guaranteed Income Bond	3 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Guaranteed Income Bond	4 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Guaranteed Income Bond	5 years	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Offshore Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Offshore Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Offshore Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Offshore Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	Offshore Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (GROSS)					
Cheltenham & Gloucester	National Savings Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	National Savings Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	National Savings Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	National Savings Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000
Cheltenham & Gloucester	National Savings Account	Instant	£1,000	5.5%	£1,000

Thought for the day

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See an IFA

The best interest rates are in the post

Since the Bank of England was given responsibility for setting interest rates after the last general election, it has nudged the cost of money upward as a means of controlling inflation. This is good news for savers.

However, finding the highest rates of return for your cash is not straightforward. Postal accounts offered by banks and building societies offer some of the best deals but are subject to terms and conditions which need close scrutiny.

Many lenders advertise gross interest payable in bold type but these rates are only available to non-taxpayers. Basic-rate income tax is deducted from interest at source. Non-taxpayers can use an R85 form, available from post offices, to apply for interest to be paid gross.

Basic-rate taxpayers need do nothing but those paying the highest marginal rate will have to declare their income from interest and dividends on their annual tax returns and see their interest further reduced.

Now include the effects of inflation. An account paying 7.5 per cent gross will return 6.0 per cent net to a basic-rate taxpayer and 4.5 per cent net to someone on the higher rate. With inflation at a 12-month average of 3.6 per cent at the end of September, the real income net of inflation from the investment does not leave much room for Christmas spending sprees.

Postal deposit accounts were introduced by Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society in 1989. According to C&G's Debbie Isaacs, the rationale was simple: "We could offer higher rates by post because accounts did not incur the overheads arising from our branch network."

Postal accounts do not have the scary connotations that direct and electronic banking hold for many customers," she said.

This may be so, but sifting through fine-print terms and conditions reveals that some of

these accounts may carry substantial penalties.

Most accounts offer a choice of monthly or annual interest. Both are variable rates, but monthly interest can be remitted to your current account as income. Annual interest will be credited to your account in arrears over a 12-month period after the day it opened.

Interest on monthly accounts will usually be between 0.25 per cent and 0.5 per cent lower than that available on an annual basis. Choosing the highest rate of annual interest seems like common sense until the costs of early withdrawal are taken into account.

Because interest is paid at the year end, withdrawals must come from the starting balance. Withdrawing amounts from the starting balance may reduce the marginal rate of interest earned on the account.

For example, anyone with £25,000 to invest would choose Yorkshire Building Society, offering 6.80 per cent, against Clydesdale Bank's flat rate of 6.75 per cent. But withdraw £100 and interest payable falls to 6.55 per cent.

Other important differences emerge between account providers. Alliance & Leicester offers competitive rates, but allows only three withdrawals a year, with a minimum £500 for each transaction. Northern Rock also allows only three transactions, but with minimum values of £1,000.

These rates apply to instant access postal accounts. Notice accounts are also available by post, on terms ranging from 30 to 120 days. The number and value of permitted transactions on these accounts will be subject to additional restrictions.

If you have money in go no deposit, postal accounts may offer the best returns, but be sure that the type of account chosen is appropriate to any likely change in your circumstances. Otherwise it could prove more expensive than you anticipated.

- Iain Morse

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DIRECT LINE RATES

SAVINGS RATES	
Direct Line Instant Access Account	
BALANCE	ANNUAL GROSS RATE
£1-£1,999	5.5%
£2,000-£9,999	5.5%
£10,000-£24,999	5.5%
£25,000-£49,999	5.5%
£50,000-£99,999	5.5%
£100,000+	5.5%
MORTGAGE RATE	
Direct Line Standard Variable Mortgage Rate	
VARIABLE RATE	5.5%
APR	5.5%

All rates correct as 18th November 1997.

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THE JONATHAN DAVIS COLUMN

Inertia index has a better track record than many fund managers

The meaning of the word inert, says my dictionary, is "having no ability to move or to resist motion; inactive, lazy or sluggish". Not exactly complimentary, is it? But inertia is a much misunderstood word, at least as far as the stock market is concerned. Take a look, for example, at the figures in the table, which comes courtesy of the investment trust analysts at NatWest Markets.

The table is the product of a technique which the NatWest analysts choose to call "inertia analysis". The idea is to try and measure how much difference the investment decisions of investment trust managers have actually made to the value of their funds over time.

This is how it works. What NatWest does is to take the portfolios of some of the largest investment trusts at various dates, typically one, three, five, 10 and 20 years ago. They then look at how the assets of the trusts were split at the time; how much in the UK, how much in the United States, how much in Japan and so on. They then calculate what the trusts' performance would have been had the managers at the time frozen the fund and gone to sleep, leaving the weightings of the funds unchanged.

It sounds complicated, but really this is a fairly straightforward exercise in number crunching. When the computer produces the "what if" figure, the analysts simply compare it

with the actual performance the fund managers have managed to achieve over the same time frame. Divide one figure by the other and, hey presto, you have a simple, albeit crude, measure of how much "value" the manager has added through his decisions over the years. A positive figure in the table shows that a trust has outperformed its relevant "inertia index"; a negative figure that it has failed to beat a policy of doing nothing.

But here's the rub: for many investment trusts, over quite long periods of time, they don't outperform the "do nothing" portfolio. There are always plenty of negative percentage figures in the tables, meaning that inertia, inactive, sluggish or lazy as she may be, has consistently the better track record.

In fact, to take an extreme example, if you apply the inertia analysis to the 10 largest international generalist investment trusts, and look at their performance over 10 years, out of one of them managed to add any value on this score. The figures range from Monks, the best with a 2.7 per cent shortfall against its inertia benchmark, to Scottish American, which came up nearly 22 per cent short of the value a no-change portfolio would have produced.

Over other periods, the picture is more balanced, with some trusts doing better than inertia, and others failing to do as well. When NatWest widened

the sample to include the 24 largest trusts for which this exercise could realistically be carried out, only over one year did more than half the trusts do better than the relevant "do nothing" index. Most years, most general investment trusts failed to add value. The fund manager could have stayed at home, which would at least have saved on his management fees.

Now at this point one has to enter some important caveats. As Hamish Buchanan of NatWest says, the inertia exercise is not as precise as it could be. There are some technical reasons why the comparisons may not be as fair to investment trust managers as they should be. In periods when sterling is strong, for example, you would expect trusts with large international holdings to do less well than a composite index figure.

A second interesting point is that outperforming the inertia index does not in itself guarantee that a trust will be among the best performing in its sector when you measure absolute returns. The reason for this is that no amount of skill can make up for being in the wrong markets in the first place. If you are running a large and well-diversified portfolio, as most of these investment trusts are, picking the right markets to invest in is more important than picking the right individual stocks. Any manager who has stayed fully invested in the United States during the last

Top and Bottom Value-Adders

Sample of 24 over three years and 10 over 10 years
+ is outperformance in per cent
- is underperformance in per cent

Three years		
Top		Bottom
Monks	+6.9	British Empire Secur -14.8
Scottish Mortgage	+6.7	British Assets -12.6
Scottish Eastern	+4.5	Dunedin Worldwide -10.0
Scottish Investment	+4.2	Scottish American -9.8
Securities Trst of Scot	+2.1	Second Alliance -6.2
Ten years		
Top		Bottom
Monks	-2.7	Scottish American -21.6
Alliance	-2.8	Witan -17.5
Foreign & Colonial	-3.1	Scottish Investment -15.7
Second Alliance	-3.2	Scottish Eastern -10.7
Scottish Mortgage	-5.0	Anglo & Overseas -6.9

legs of the bull market there, for example, will have done better than anyone who invested in Japan, even if the latter beat the Tokyo index by a mile and the former failed to keep pace with the Dow Jones index.

Fund managers could also argue that the long term of, say, 10 years is made up of a succession of short terms, say, one year, where they have done relatively well. So inertia has her limits. The caveats should not be allowed to disguise the importance of the general conclusion, however. The lesson, which we already knew from studies of unit trust performance, is that it is very difficult for professional investment managers to outperform the market averages consistently over time.

Once you take the cost of hiring the manager into account, then tot up the transaction costs involved in buying and selling so many shares, the returns often don't justify the expense of active management. This is just another way of saying index funds have a lot going for them. They don't absolve you of the need to decide how much money you should have invested in the stock market, but they provide a relatively cost effective way of gaining that exposure.

Equally, just because inertia

has proved to have such a good track record, it does not mean that investment trusts are necessarily a poor place to invest.

Because of the discount factor - the fact that the asset value and share price of an investment trust don't move hand in hand - the reverse can often be the case. If you buy when discounts are low, and they subsequently move in your favour, investment trust shares will produce a better return than either an index fund or the equivalent unit trust. For the past three years, with discounts widening, returns to shareholders in the higher investment trusts have suffered. Most have underperformed the All Share index. But over the longer term, there is no need to write off the big generalist investment trusts.

One can't leave the subject without a word of praise for the fund managers at Scottish Mortgage and Scottish Eastern (run by Baillie Gifford and Martin Currie respectively). Over one and three years, they have managed a distinguished double - coming high in the rankings for absolute returns and also beating a policy of inertia investing as well. In Edinburgh, at least, someone is still flying the flag for active investment.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

Don't gamble unless you have money to lose

Go to half a dozen reputable stockbrokers for advice on investing in shares and the chances are you will be given six different answers. This is after you have provided all the relevant information such as your age, income, assets and liabilities, family commitments, future plans and your attitude towards risk. The fact of the matter is there is no "right" way. But there are ways which should be avoided.

There is no shortage of people with views on what shares to buy to make a fortune. In the belief that garments made from sackcloth are going to be the fashion for the millennium, they could wax lyrical about a small quoted company which is in an ideal position to corner the market. Of course, you are to tell no one else and both of you will make a fortune.

However, if you are serious about making money from the stock market and you do not have money to lose, do not adopt a gambling instinct. Of course, you may pick a share which is a winner, but on the other hand, you may lose your shirt.

On a serious note regarding tips from friends who work for a company, there are very strict rules regarding acting on privileged information (ie unpublished facts) which, when revealed, will influence a share's price. Insider dealing, as it is called, is a criminal offence.

While you may also do well by sticking a pin in the shares listed on the business pages, you could just as easily pick a Polly Peck, Lowndes Queensway or some other company which is destined to be worthless in the future. I once heard of an investor who bought low-priced shares in companies with unusual-sounding names. Neither of these ways is recommended.

Before you begin to decide what you are to buy, you must give some serious thought to your own position. Assuming that you have adequate pension arrangements and a suitable cash reserve, what money can you afford to invest in the stock market? What are you looking for? Do you want to build a capital sum for the future, or are you really looking for income?

If you are within a few years of retirement, and are relying on a share portfolio to pay off debts or buy an annuity, time is not on your side to recover from any losses. Your priority is likely to be preservation of capital while seeking ways to generate additional income. It is likely that lower-risk shares, together with gilts, unit trusts

and cash deposits, will be your route to achieve your goals.

On the other hand, if you are younger and financially secure, you can afford to be a little more aggressive in your approach. Including shares of some smaller companies in your portfolio may therefore appeal, as they have the potential for spectacular growth. However, a higher proportion of shares in your portfolio may mean a loss will cause you sleepless nights, this route is certainly not for you. Instead you should be thinking of a few shares which are "growth stocks", which means they will hopefully steadily increase in value over time, as well as some more pedestrian investments to act as a cushion.

However, whether your aim is income, spectacular growth or more reliable appreciation in the value of your shares, there is one golden rule - spread your risk. Do not set yourself up as a hostage to fortune by just relying on the performance of one or two shares. Opinions differ as to the ideal number of companies in which a private investor should hold shares. Some say 10, others as many as 20. ProShare's chief executive, Gill Nott, says: "As a very general rule, you should aim to have the shares of at least six different companies in your portfolio at any one time."

Spreading the risk by holding shares in, say, six banks or six retailers is not the answer, however. Ms Nott's advice is clear. "It is wise to buy shares in a number of different companies in different sectors of the market, so that if one share or sector performs badly, this will be balanced by the performance of your other investments." In other words, consider selecting one share from six different sectors.

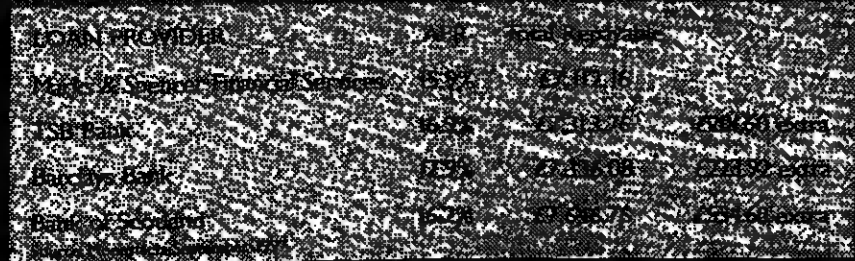
Given that the recommended minimum shareholding is £2,000, so as to absorb the buying and selling costs, how does the newcomer to the stock market with limited funds start? One solution is to begin by investing in a unit trust before investing directly in shares. This will create an instant portfolio. While more funds are being accumulated, make some imaginary investments and follow their progress to test your skill in stock selection.

- John Andrew

"Choosing the Right Investment for You" is ProShare Investor Update No 2. Send an A4 stamped addressed envelope to ProShare, 13-14 Basinghall Street, London EC2P 5BQ.

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Which of the following national newspapers do you read during the week (ie Monday - Friday) and on Saturday?

	Monday-Friday		Saturday	
	Main	Other	Main	Other
Daily Mail	1	1	1	1
Daily Telegraph	2	2	2	2
Express	3	3	3	3
Financial Times	4	4	4	4
Guardian	5	5	5	5
The Independent	6	6	6	6
The Mirror	7	7	7	7
Sun	8	8	8	8
The Times	9	9	9	9

And which national Sunday newspapers do you read - almost always (A/A), quite often (Q/O), only occasionally (O/O) or never?

	A/A	Q/O	O/O	Never
Express on Sunday	1	2	3	4
Independent on Sunday	10	1	2	3
Mail on Sunday	11	1	2	3
Sunday Mirror	12	1	2	3
News of the World	13	1	2	3
Observer	14	1	2	3
The People	15	1	2	3
Sunday Telegraph	16	1	2	3
Sunday Times	17	1	2	3

What are your current living arrangements?

Living with parents	18	1
Renting (council)	19	2
Renting (other)	20	3
Own home with mortgage	21	4
Own home outright	22	5

SAVINGS

How important is saving to you?

Very important	23	1
Quite important	24	2
Not very important	25	3
Not at all important	26	4

Why do you save (please tick all that apply)?

For my children	27	1
For my grandchildren	28	2
Security	29	3
Retirement	30	4
Property	31	5
Holidays	32	6
None of the above	33	7
I do not save	34	8

Which of the savings accounts detailed below do you hold?

Postal	35	1
Instant access	36	2
High interest	37	3
Tessa	38	4
Off-shore	39	5
PEP	40	6

When do you plan to open any of the accounts below?

	1-6 mths	7-12 mths	13-24 mths	24+ mths	Never
Postal	41	1	2	3	4
Instant access	42	1	2	3	4
High interest	43	1	2	3	4
Tessa	44	1	2	3	4
Off-shore	45	1	2	3	4
PEP	46	1	2	3	4

How do you contribute to your savings, by paying in a lump sum or regular monthly payments?

Lump sum	47	1	Both	2
Regular monthly payments	48	2	None	3

STOCKS & SHARES

Do you own any stocks and/or shares?

Yes	49	1	No (go to question 12)	2
-----	----	---	------------------------	---

What type of company have you invested in? (please tick all that apply)

Blue chip	50	1
FTSE Top 100	51	2
Smaller company	52	3
Pennyshare	53	4

How often do you usually buy or sell stocks and shares?

Every month	54	1	24+ months	2
1-6 months	55	2		
7-12 months	56	3		
13-24 months	57	4		

PEPS, INVESTMENT TRUSTS & UNIT TRUSTS

Which of the following PEP, investment trust or unit trust providers are you aware of?

Jupiter	58	1
Perpetual	59	2
Guinness Flight	60	3
Virgin Direct	61	4
Schroders	62	5
GTL Global	63	6
Framlington	64	7
Foreign and Colonial	65	8

Martin Currie	66	1
Hendersons	67	2
Friends Provident	68	3
Any other	69	4

How were you made aware of these providers?

Newspaper	70	1
Professional magazines	71	2
Posters	72	3
IFAs	73	4

What attracted you to the PEP, investment trust or unit trust which you hold?

Advertisements	74	1
Word of mouth	75	2
IFA	76	3
Can't remember	77	4

Have you been the recipient of any windfall monies?

Yes	78	1	No	2
-----	----	---	----	---

READER SURVEY

THE INDEPENDENT
ON SATURDAY

Dear Reader,

In order to develop and improve the personal finance pages of our titles, it is essential for us to hear about our reader's views and opinions of our coverage. Your likes, dislikes and suggestions are vital in our planning and fine-tuning. If you are interested in playing a part in this process, the questionnaire on this page gives you the opportunity.

It should only take about 15 minutes to complete and you should bear in mind the following when filling it in:

- There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer honestly and feel free to mention any likes and dislikes that could help to improve the paper.
- You do not have to provide your name and address, though if you want to or would be happy to help us with further research, then please fill it in.
- Please send your completed questionnaire to: The Independent Financial Questionnaire, FREEPOST 13583, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, to arrive no later than 12th December 1997.

16 Has the windfall already been invested/spent?

Yes	79	1	No	2
-----	----	---	----	---

IF NO, how are you planning to invest it?

PEP	80	1
Investment trust	81	2
Unit trust	82	3
Savings account	83	4
Stocks and shares	84	5
Pension	85	6
Other	86	7
I'm not investing it	87	8

17 Are you investing for growth or for income?

Growth	88	1	Income	2
--------	----	---	--------	---

18 Are you planning to invest a lump sum or monthly instalments within the next 12 months?

Lump sum	89	1	Monthly	2	Both	3
----------	----	---	---------	---	------	---

19 Do you have a mortgage?

Yes	90	1	No	2
-----	----	---	----	---

IF YES, what type(s) of mortgage do you have (please tick all that apply)?

Endowment	91	1
Repayment	92	2
PEP	93	3
Fixed	94	4
Variable	95	5
Peppered	96	6
Discounted	97	7
Pegged	98	8
Other	99	9

IF NO, when do you think you are likely to take out a mortgage?

Next 6 months	100	1	Further on in the future	2
7-12 months	101	3	Never	4
13-24 months	102	5	Don't know	6
25-36 months	103	7		

20 How well-informed do you consider yourself to be about mortgages?

Very well informed	104	1
Quite well informed	105	2
I know enough	106	3
Not well informed	107	4
Not at all informed	108	5

21 Have you protected payments on your mortgage?

Yes	109	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

22 Are you happy with the type of mortgage you now have?

Yes	110	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

IF NOT, why not?

	111	1
--	-----	---

23 What is the total size of the mortgage on your property?

up to £20,000	112	1	£20,000-£24,999	2
£20,000-£24,999	113	3	£25,000-£29,999	4
£25,000-£29,999	114	5	£30,000-£34,999	6
£30,000-£34,999	115	7	£35,000-£39,999	8
£35,000-£39,999	116	9	£40,000+	10

24 How long have you had the mortgage?

Less than 12 months	117	1
1-2 years	118	2
3-5 years	119	3
6-10 years	120	4
11-15 years	121	5
16 years +	122	6

25 Who is it with?

	123	1
--	-----	---

26 How did you arrange it?

Building Society	124	1
Bank	125	2
IFA	126	3
Mortgage Broker	127	4

Do you intend increasing your mortgage on your current home or moving house in the next 12 months?

Increasing my mortgage on my current home	128	1
Moving house	129	2
None of these	130	3

28 Is your buildings insurance with your lender or privately organised?

Lender	131	1	Privately organised	2
--------	-----	---	---------------------	---

29 Is your home and contents insurance with your lender or privately organised?

Lender	132	1	Privately organised	2
--------	-----	---	---------------------	---

30 Would you consider taking out a second mortgage for letting purposes?

I already do	133	1
I would definitely consider it	134	2
I would maybe consider it	135	3
I would definitely not consider it	136	4

31 Do you intend to remortgage your property within the next 12 months?

Yes	137	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

32 How well-informed do you consider yourself to be about pensions?

Very well informed	138	1
Quite well informed	139	2
I know enough	140	3
Not well informed	141	4
Not at all informed	142	5

33 Do you have a pension?

Yes	143	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

IF YES, is it a personal pension plan or a company pension scheme?

Personal pension plan	144	1
Company pension scheme	145	2

IF NO, when do you think you are likely to take out a personal pension plan?

Next 6 months	146	1	25-36 months	2
7-12 months	147	3	Further in the future	4
13-24 months	148	5	Never	6
			Don't know	7

34 If you already have a personal pension plan, what made you initially take it out?

Advertisement	149	1
Sought advice from IFA	150	2
Other	151	3

35 If you already have a pension plan, do you make additional voluntary contributions?

Yes	152	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

36 Which of the following pension providers are you aware of?

Legal & General	153	1
Virgin Direct	154	2
Merchant Investors	155	3
Equitable Life	156	4

37 Do you have a private health scheme?

Yes	157	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

IF YES, is it a company policy or a personal policy?

Company policy	158	1
Personal policy	159	2

38 How aware are you of the products offered by these companies?

PPP	160	1
BUPA	161	2
Norwich Union	162	3
Zurich	163	4
Prime Health	164	5

39 How often do you read the personal finance pages of national Saturday newspapers?

Almost always	165	1
Quite often	166	2
Only occasionally	167	3
Never	168	4

40 Where else do you seek advice?

IFA	169	1
Bank	170	2
Building Society	171	3

The Saturday Independent

Other newspapers	172	4
Friends	173	5
Other	174	6

41 Have you ever responded to editorial recommendations?

Yes	175	1	No	2
-----	-----	---	----	---

42 How well do you think the Saturday Independent covers the following personal finance topics?

	Very well	Quite well	Not at all well
--	-----------	------------	-----------------

Pensions	176	1	2	3
Credit	177	1	2	3
Mortgage advice	178	1	2	3
Investment products	179	1	2	3
Savings	180	1	2	3
Private health	181	1	2	3
Stocks and shares	182	1	2	3

43 If you were editor of the Personal Finance pages of The Saturday Independent, what would you do to improve them?

7/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997

Should I stay or should I go to another plan?

What is your best course of action if you take out a personal pension and then stop paying the premiums? John Chapman finds some answers in the conclusion of a two-part analysis.

Hundreds of thousands of people take out personal pensions with good intentions then stop paying their premiums for a variety of reasons—perhaps because they lose their job, move to a company with an occupational pension scheme, start a family or have other priorities.

If you are one of these people, you have a problem. You will probably find most of the premiums you have paid in the first few years have been swallowed up by "front-end" charges and you will not get value for money from the pension plan.

So what do you do with the contributions you have made? You cannot cash them in. Your pension company should, however, tell you the transfer value and the paid-up value for your contributions.

The transfer value is the amount of cash it would allow you to transfer into another pension scheme or plan elsewhere. The paid-up value is the amount credited to you should you leave your funds within your plan. The paid-up value will then increase with the company's subsequent investment performance minus the annual management charges, which together would determine the eventual value of the policy when it matures.

If you stop contributing to your personal pension because you go to work for a company with an occupational pension scheme, you could switch your transfer value into it. Whether that is actually sensible will depend on several factors, including the conditions of entry, effects of employer's contributions and the charges within the company scheme. These factors will require specific examination.

For many people, the choice will be between transferring to another pension plan or staying put. Most companies pitch their transfer values at the same levels as their paid-up values. A few will be substantial but many will be low. Whatever the size of the transfer values, what matters now are the likely returns should you keep your lump sum with the same plan or opt for a transfer. Those prospective returns will depend on a combination of the investment performance and the various charges imposed. No one can tell which company will perform best over the next 15 or 30 years, so charges must be the main basis for comparison.

Your transfer value lump sum can be invested as a single-premium pension plan in another company or even in your present company. You will want to choose a company with low charges. Making the standard assumption of 9 per cent a year investment growth, several companies, including Equitable Life, General Accident, Halifax, Legal & General, National Mutual, Norwich Union, Scottish Amicable and Scottish Widows, project growth net of charges of 8.1 per cent a year or more for single-premium plans over 25 or 30 years.

Should you transfer to such low charge plans? That depends on the projected growth of a paid-up plan with your present company. Until this month paid-up values were a grey area. But an initiative by Alan Lakey of Highclere Financial Services has achieved a breakthrough. His survey has enabled me to make the comparisons in the table. For example, Alliance & Leicester shows a transfer value and a paid-up value after two years both at £4,862. The paid-up value would rise to £40,708 at maturity, implying a growth rate of 7.9 per cent. If instead the transfer value was invested in a plan with projected growth of 8.1 per cent, the new maturity value would be £43,046, an increase of 6 per cent. Like other increases obtainable



Hard one to call: People who stop making payments into their pension plan will have to decide whether to transfer or stay put. Making the wrong decision can be costly

from transfers from the companies in the first group, the prospective gain is not remarkable.

Transfers from companies in the second group suggest much larger rewards. An Allied Dunbar planholder would be offered a very disappointing £1,645 after two years, rising to only £7,348 if left to maturity after a growth of only 5.5 per cent a year. A transfer to a plan with 8.1 per cent growth would project a maturity value 98 per cent higher. Increases of about 50 per cent are indicated by transferring away from Eagle Star, Lincoln and Scottish Mutual, and increases of 20-30 per cent by transferring away from several other companies.

A third group of companies offers paid-up values greater than the transfer values. But do not be misled. Where there are striking differences there are also extraordinary charges on the paid-up values. The growth rates on J Rothschild, Skandia and Sun Life plans would only be 3 or 4 per cent a year. In nine out of the 14 cases the transfer route appears best. Indeed gains of 52 per cent and 74 per cent are indicated

by taking the low transfer values of Skandia and Sun Life, rather than paid-up values as much as double the transfer values.

Differences in projected returns from transfer and paid-up values also arise at later stages of plans, but these are not so large as those arising in the very early stages.

What lies behind the differences—not only in the levels of transfer and paid-up values, but also in the charges on them? First, companies have very different expenses and their charges differ accordingly. Second, companies may prefer to load charges on to paid-up values because until now they have not attracted the interest of the regulators or the media. Third, some companies have deceptive charges called capital units and capital levies, which bear particularly hard on early paid-up values.

More light needs to be thrown on the levels and treatment of paid-up values. It is astonishing that it has taken so long to recognise their importance. But at least the murky world of personal pensions is getting a bit clearer.

Windfall shareholders buck the downward trend

The seven weeks since the stock market peaked has been a testing time for Britain's 10 million newest shareholders, those who picked up windfall shares in the five mutuals that have converted into quoted companies this year.

The 100 shares in the UK have fallen by an average 8.7 per cent since the all-time peak on 3 October and prices are still bouncing around like a yo-yo.

But windfall shares have actually bucked the trend in recent weeks. All five companies, Halifax, Alliance & Leicester, Woolwich, Northern Rock and Norwich Union, with recent windfall shares in issue, outperformed the index over the past seven weeks.

Norwich Union and Northern Rock are worth more than they were at the top of the market, and the other three are down only 3 to 4 per cent, half the market average.

Amanda Davidson, an independent financial adviser, said: "We have certainly been advising clients to hang on to their windfall shares, so I'm delighted that is borne out by the performance we've got here. It does show that people with windfall shares should think twice before selling them to go Christmas shopping."

Before drawing any conclusions from this, however, we should note a few caveats. First, we have measured the progress of windfall shares only over seven weeks, far too short a period to draw any firm conclusions. Second, the windfall index measures the performance of only five shares, all in the financial sector, which is not representative of the stock market as a whole.

But look a little further and the performance of our windfalls looks even better.

The 105 stocks in the financial sector are still, on average, 12 per cent below the peak last month, the 11 retail banks have fallen by more than one-sixth and the eight companies in the life assurance sector are down, on average, by about 1 per cent.

Ms Davidson said: "A lot of people who've got windfall shares are coming into the stock market for the first time, and they will find it terribly encouraging to see that their shares have done well. They've all, individually, done better than the FTSE 100."

Matthew Orr, of stockbrokers Killick & Co, believes one explanation for windfall shares climbing while others fall may be that institutions, such as pension funds, are still short of

windfall shares in their portfolios. If this is the case, you would expect the institutions to become buyers when windfall shares weaken, immediately helping their price to bounce back.

Many investors also think their recent conversion to plc status makes all five companies candidates for merger and takeover activity in the sector.

Norwich Union is frequently mentioned as a tempting target for a bank to buy, and a far more profitable investment than those poorly performing investment banking subsidiaries. Norwich Union is also wide open for a hostile takeover bid, unlike the newly converted building societies.

They are protected from hostile takeovers for the first five years as public companies provided they themselves do not go on the acquisition trail.

It does not mean they would not look for a friendly merger if times get tough, which may be why Northern Rock shares are also resisting the downward trend.

These tentative results also underline the point that the companies which have issued windfall shares so far are generally viewed as sound investments.

— Paul Slade

BARGAIN BASEMENT

Cheltenham & Gloucester has raised its standard variable mortgage rate by 0.25 per cent to 8.7 per cent and the rate on its instant transfer account by the same amount to 7.25 per cent gross. It has also launched a new series of mortgages with rates fixed for two, three or five years. Contact branches.

Canada Life is launching a new income bond with a growth option. The bond guarantees the capital will be returned at the end of five years, and en-

sures a certain level of income in year one. Income in years two to five is linked to movements in interest base rates plus bonuses each year the FTSE 100 index increases by at least 5 per cent. Minimum investment is £5,000. The bond is available through independent financial advisers.

John Charcol Insurance Brokers has reduced the rates on its accident, sickness and unemployment insurance products by almost 20 per cent.

Benefits can be extended to include income protection. Call 0800 999393.

Nationwide Building Society will refund the legal fees for customers who are remortgaging with the society from other lenders. Contact branches.

Legal & General has increased the interest rates paid on its 60-day notice account and its instant access account. New rates range from 7.15 per cent to 7.75 per cent. Call 0500 111200.

Personal pension plans - transfer, paid-up and maturity values

Projections of 30-year plans after two years

	Transfer value (£)	Paid-up value (£)	Maturity value from paid-up value (£)	Growth rate (%)	After transfer to 8.1% growth, new maturity value	Difference in maturity values (£)	% difference
First Group							
Alliance & Leicester	4,862	4,862	40,708	7.9	43,046	+2,338	+8
Britannic	2,589	2,589	21,850	7.9	22,922	+1,072	+1
Equitable	5,048	5,048	49,566	8.5	-	-	-
Legal & General	4,432	4,432	41,086	8.3	-	-	-
Nationwide	4,872	4,872	41,103	7.9	43,135	+2,032	+5
Norwich Union	2,890	2,890	24,703	8.0	25,587	+884	+4
Scottish Widows	4,596	4,596	42,405	8.3	-	-	-
Sun Life (red alloc)	2,914	2,914	25,894	8.0	25,799	+105	0
Virgin	5,147	5,147	42,833	7.9	45,589	+2,756	+6
Second Group							
Abbey National	3,296	3,296	26,027	7.7	29,181	+3,154	+12
Allied Dunbar	1,845	1,845	7,348	5.5	14,584	+7,216	+98
AXA Equity & Law	2,825	2,825	20,907	7.4	25,011	+4,104	+20
Canada Life	1,381	1,381	10,488	7.5	12,227	+1,739	+11
Colonial	1,798	1,798	12,759	7.2	15,919	+3,160	+25
Commercial Union	4,810	4,810	34,703	7.5	40,815	+6,112	+18
Eagle Star	3,547	3,547	20,177	6.4	31,404	+10,227	+51
General Accident (ra)	2,931	2,931	21,083	7.3	25,950	+4,867	+23
General Accident (lev)	4,658	4,658	31,540	7.1	41,240	+9,700	+31
Guardian	2,350	2,350	15,822	7.1	20,806	+4,884	+31
Lincoln	1,346	1,346	8,127	8.6	11,917	+3,790	+47
Midland	3,735	3,735	27,715	7.5	33,068	+5,353	+19
Nat West	3,157	3,157	22,516	7.2	27,951	+5,435	+24
Royal & Sun Alliance	4,614	4,614	36,229	7.6	40,851	+4,622	+13
Scottish Amicable (ind)	2,496	2,496	19,711	7.5	22,099	+2,388	+12
Scottish Amicable (flex)	2,519	2,519	19,911	7.6	22,302	+2,381	+12
Scottish Mutual	4,700	4,700	26,382	6.3	41,612	+15,220	+58
Standard Life	4,634	4,634	37,162	7.7	41,028	+8,866	+10
Woolwich	5,085	5,085	37,908	7.4	45,021	+7,113	+19
Third Group							
Barclays	2,701	4,713	23,711	5.4	23,914	+203	+1
Black Horse	1,559	2,159	17,619	7.8	13,802	-3,817	-22
Britannia	2,713	4,748	22,866	5.8	24,020	+1,154	+1
Clarendon Medical	2,951	4,779	25,326	5.3	26,127	+801	+3
Friends Provident	3,126	4,798	25,780	6.2	27,676	+1,946	+8
J Rothschild	1,473	4,988	13,826	3.9	13,041	-785	-6
London & Man Pans	2,705	4,726	20,834	5.4	23,948	+3,114	+15
NPI	2,855	4,941	24,000	5.8	25,277	+1,277	+5
National Mutual	2,637	4,589	25,308	6.3	23,347	-1,961	-8
Scottish Equitable	2,231	4,829	17,918	4.8	19,752	+1,834	+10
Scottish Life	2,184	4,828	19,778	7.9	19,345	-433	-2
Skandia (Perpetual)	2,612	4,828	14,984	4.1	23,125	+8,141	+51
Sun Life (capital units)	2,359	4,785	12,024	3.3	20,886	+8,862	+74
TSB	1,556	2,156	17,098	7.6	13,776	-3,322	-19

Source: Money Management November 1997 (first three columns)

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9/PROPERTY

The secret of getting a longer lease without going to war

Tenants can now buy freeholds and extend leases, provided they have patience as well as cash. But it is not a simple process. A generation ago many properties fell into disrepair because tenants could not buy short leases and landlords were unwilling to spend money on essential maintenance.

England's archaic leasehold law was reformed in 1993. Then the new law itself needed to be reformed. And still, Robert Liebman says, more tinkering may be needed.

Short leases have received a new lease on life thanks to the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act of 1993 and later amendments which allow many tenants to extend their leases by 90 years. Alternatively, qualifying tenants can communally buy their freehold outright.

But these rights come neither cheaply nor easily. Tenants must compensate landlords for lost value, and also pay the landlord's as

well as their own legal and professional bills.

Cheap it isn't, but tenants obtain properties which are more valuable and more sellable. Their costs are also commensurate with the increased value that they enjoy.

Although a tenant cannot be forced either to seek enfranchisement or a lease extension, no flat-owner or flat-buyer should be indifferent to the workings of this law. Even a tenant perfectly content with his lot and his lease can suddenly find himself in a war zone. Complete insulation against a war between neighbours and landlord is not always feasible.

Especially concerning lease extensions, many landlords and tenants come to terms quickly and amicably. Occasionally, they agree to their own variation on the basic law—a lease extended for more than 90 years, for example, but with a substantial rather than a peppercorn (nominal) ground rent.

But some landlords resent the new law and resist it strenuously. Instead of good-faith negotiations and compromise, disagreement abounds. The Leasehold Valuation Tribunal, which cannot award costs, is excellent at concentrating minds, and many bitter disputes are suddenly resolved at the last

minute. Some disputes go the brutal distance, to the dreaded Lands Tribunal.

Landlords fight their corner with all of the privileges the law allows, which are many. Flapless tenants can pay well over the odds in more ways than one.

Four elderly tenants in Sussex had very long leases but also a landlord who imposed steep service charges and otherwise made their lives miserable. They won their enfranchisement case but the landlord appealed and then went bust. Their costs, no longer recoverable, totalled some £20,000.

In a lease extension case in Harrow, north-west London, two couples had virtually identical flats each with 41-year leases and each with essentially the same values. The landlord appealed to the Lands Tribunal and, fearful of additional costs, one of the couples no longer argued their case. The other couple actively fought on and, despite their similar positions, ended up paying many thousands more than the couple who withdrew.

The stakes in central London can be even higher. "London is owned by half a dozen big landlords," says Simon Marr-Johnson, a chartered surveyor with the London firm of Marr-Johnson &

Stevens. "In addition, to flats, offices and shops, it owns large areas of leasehold houses, particularly in Belgravia and South Kensington."

In the eyes of the law, a house is not always a house. A 1996 Belgravia case involved two adjacent news cottages, each with a garage on a separate short lease so located in the premises that each property could legally constitute not a "house" but a "flat".

"The owners sought lease extensions as a block of two flats," says Joan South of the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association. After a two-day hearing that stretched to five days, the price was settled but tenants had to pay costs greater than £40,000. "The tenants foot the bill so the landlords hire the top QCs." The steep fees then deter other tenants from seeking enfranchisements.

Laymen can forgive themselves for feeling baffled by an area of law so complex and quirky as to baffle more than a few solicitors.

To enfranchise a property itself along with a certain proportion of tenants must qualify. Enfranchisement is not allowed in a conversion of four or fewer flats, in one of which the freeholder or an adult family member has been living for the past year. However, ten-

ants in such properties can extend their leases.

Weigh domestic realities against legal rights, Mrs South cautions. "If only two of three occupier-owners in a conversion agree to enfranchise, the two become the landlord over the third. If the third then applies for a lease ex-

Some landlords resent the new law and resist it strenuously. Instead of good-faith negotiations and compromise, disagreement abounds

ension, they can make life hell for him by delaying." The situation is certainly ripe for conflict.

Some costs may be hidden. "The costs depend on the number of interests. There will be one freeholder, but there may be various intermediate leases, and the tenant would have to serve notices on all interests," says Richard Berns, senior partner with Piper Smith & Basham, a London firm of solicitors.

And once you are in, you cannot simply drop out and wash your hands of the matter. Tenants must

still pay the fees incurred by the landlord to that point.

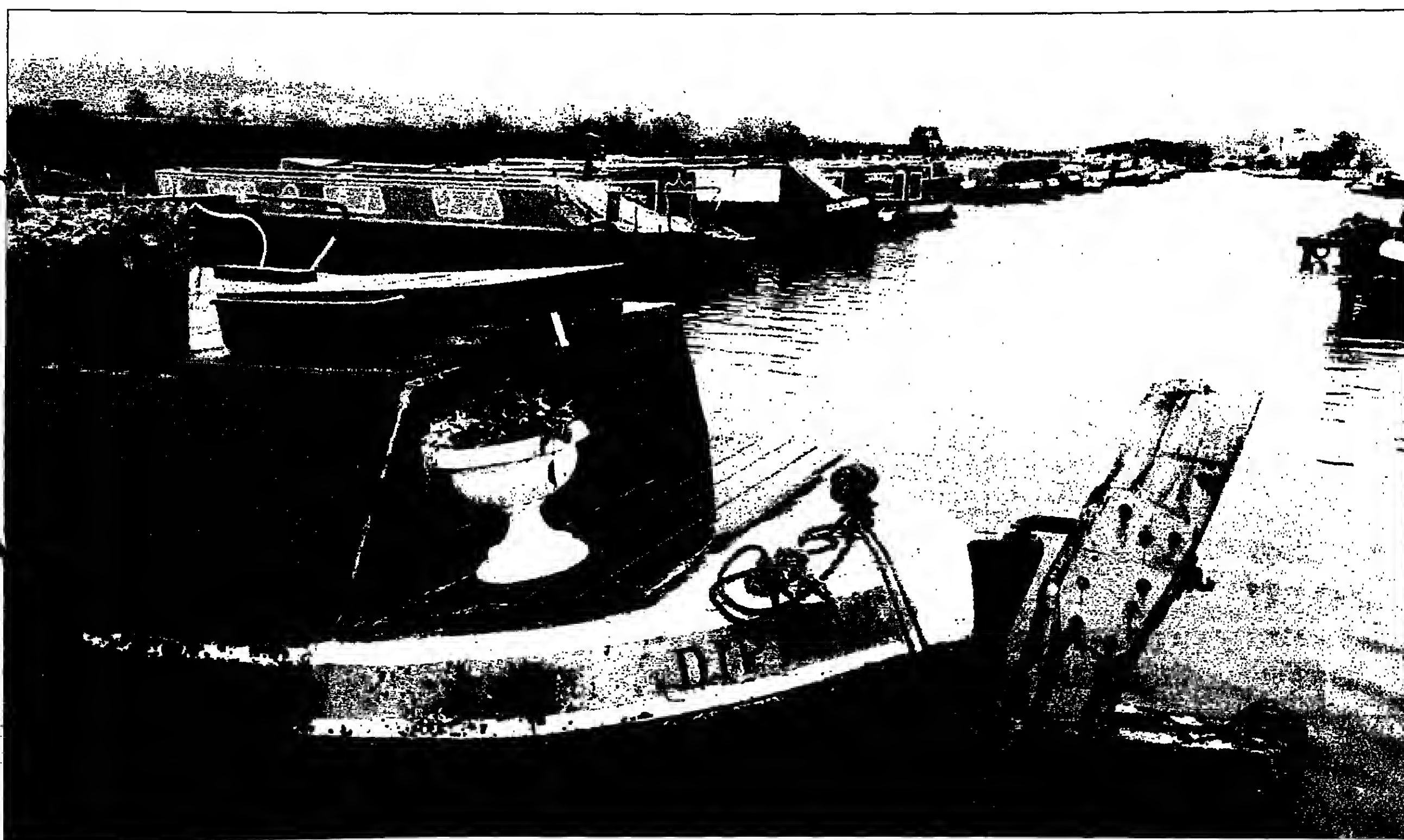
Fortunately, traumatic outcomes are relatively rare, and tenants can benefit, for example, from transferable residency qualifications. "Instead of waiting three years, the seller can serve a notice on the landlord and get it assigned to you," Mr Berns says.

Costs are pretty much in line with property values, whether that property be in Brixton or Belgravia. Information about the other occupiers and the landlord of a premises is self-evidently vital. And, as always, attention must be paid to location.

Mr Marr-Johnson encounters "reputable as well as pugnacious landlords in central London, but also some unscrupulous landlords who have been buying freehold blocks in the suburbs, behaving harshly towards the lessees and hence forcing up the cost of the freehold to them."

Mrs Joan Smith, Leasehold Enfranchisement Association, 10 Upper Phillimore Gardens, London W8 7HB; Marr-Johnson & Stevens, 15 Bolton Street, London W1Y 7PA. 0171 499 3199; Piper Smith & Basham, 31 Warwick Square, London SW1V 2AF. 0171 828 8685.

CANAL LIVING



Don't let the neighbours drop in: Steve Day's barge on the Grand Union Canal at Berkhamsted

Photograph: John Lawrence

Everywhere, the newcomers are flooding in

The old mattresses and floating pieces of plastic are gradually disappearing from the canals and they are increasingly seen as places for leisure, and living. Penny Jackson meets a man who is at home on the water, and considers the many options for those who would like to enjoy the tranquillity they offer while remaining on terra firma.

According to British Waterways, which runs the canal system, half the population of this country lives within five miles of a canal. If that is something of which many of us have only just become aware, it is

probably because canals are at the heart of recent urban regeneration.

Until now, the canal corridors that ran through the redundant and neglected industrial areas were generally seen only by those in boats. But with the trend for transforming factory, warehouses and mills into fashionable homes has come an appreciation of the canals themselves has been kindled along.

For some, the discovery that they have a special feel, quite different from rivers, is nothing new. Steve Day, an electronics engineer, not satisfied with having always lived alongside canals, has taken to life on the water. His home is a 40ft steel narrowboat on the Grand Union Canal near Berkhamsted and when he is not working

— at present in a local boatyard — he is travelling through the country's vast system of waterways. "I even bumped into my parents once in Manchester. I turned round a corner and there they were."

Abrupt changes of scenery are one of the great charms of canals. One moment countryside, the next a sweep of warehouses. In the past five years, Steve Day has seen big changes. "The development is a mixed bag. Many of the buildings, barges, leggers' huts and lock-keepers' cottages have been done up well, but there are still some sad old places, tucked away."

His greatest concern is that the canals are changing from oases of calm to busy, over-regulated waterways, where there are even suggestions of

speed guns being introduced. "Too many people fly up and down without any respect for safety or the environment," he adds.

While leisure activities have obviously revitalised many canals, British Waterways, a government body, is charged with the responsibility of encouraging their use and development while preserving their character and has to be consulted on all planning applications.

Like Inland Waterways, a voluntary association which has fought long and hard for the survival of canals, it sees one of the biggest threats to the diversity of the canal system coming from a tendency of developers to adopt a common standard. Unique features can get lost under uniform designs

of stone, brick and cast iron and if it becomes impossible to tell whether you are in Scotland or Staffordshire, something irreplaceable has been lost.

Charles Khoo, an architect, responsible for Baldwin Terrace on Regent's Canal in Islington, believes there is enough freedom for imaginative design within the original facade. "Large industrial windows means that you can make the most of views of the water without losing the detail." Indeed, since most canal-side facades are protected it is often more a case of keeping tabs on the scale and sensitivity of new schemes.

One of the most successful of those, it is agreed by even the most ardent conservationists, is in the centre of Birmingham. Its maze of canals lent themselves

to the regeneration of a once-dismal area that is now thriving and fashionable, with restaurants, bars, shops and business along the waterside. Crosby Homes's popular Symphony Court development of 143 homes, in Brindley Place, sold in year.

Out of town, the old lock-keepers' cottages are always in demand. Clive Mosson of Aitchisons in Berkhamsted finds they do not become available very often, and can be small, although, of course, they usually have rural views.

The Victorian villas in the centre of Berkhamsted with gardens that run down to the canal would start at about £169,000 for one with three bedrooms, rising to £235,000 for a larger house. Moorings add a premium of around £20,000-

£30,000. A home in a converted mill on the outskirts of the town is on the market for around £225,000. In Derbyshire, a converted grain store in the Shardlow Wharf conservation area is for sale, through Savills, for £195,000.

There are few large properties on canals, even if images of grand houses in London's Little Venice do spring to mind. A large Georgian house that is about to come on to Aitchison's books predated the canal, and since it is sandwiched between the railway line and waterway was clearly an obstacle in the path of the two early transport links. Canal-side dwellers must also accept that pedestrian traffic along the towpaths comes with the view of the water.

David Fickling, a children's book editor, who has recently

moved into Berkeley Homes' development on Oxford Canal at Port Meadow, relishes the idea of a working canal. "I look at the old iron foundry and like the thought that perhaps manhole covers were being made and sent off to the empire. If you are interested in industrial archaeology and history, canals are a wonderful place." Nor does he object to intrusive sounds. "One of the nicest things during the summer was the music from a passing barge."

And as for the nearby railway line, "the sound of the train is brilliant, if rather loud at three in the morning."

Aitchisons: 01442 862533; Savills: 0115 955 1122; Berkeley Homes, Oxford Waterside: 01865 311449

AT HOME/STORING WINE...

Don't lose your bottle

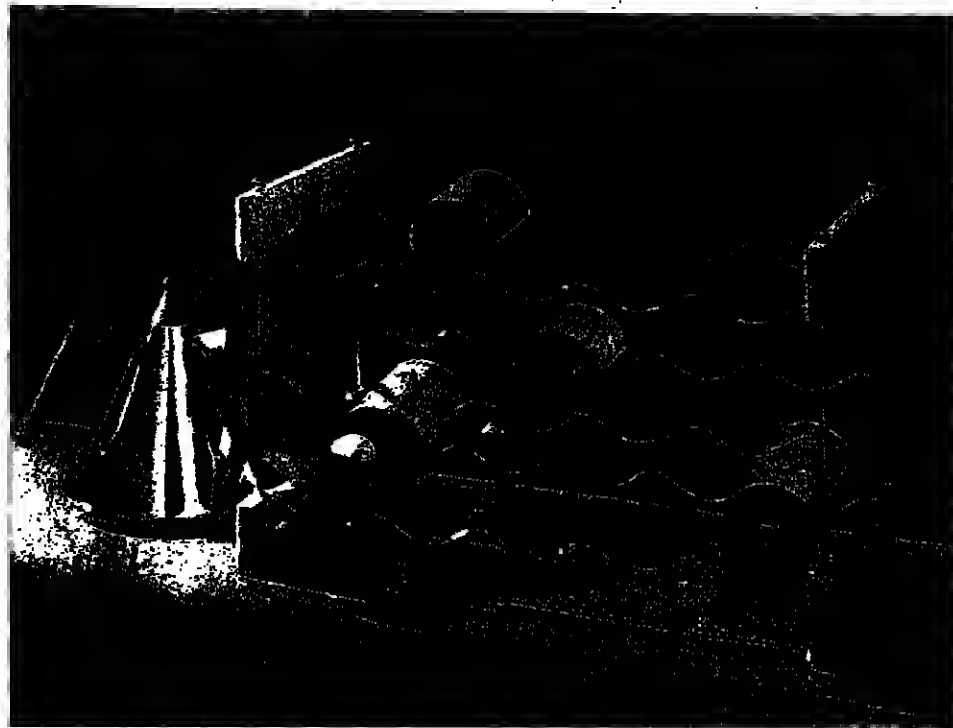
Some people keep thousands; some have a few singles. Rosalind Russell samples the best ways to keep wine, even if it will be gone in a few hours.

So where do you keep your bottled up? Under the stairs? In the kitchen? The garage is a popular stash, especially before Christmas when space is at a premium. Imbibers with no temperature-controlled cellar to call their own have to make do with what they have, even if the experts say all three choices are probably the worst you could make. The first two are usually too warm and the last suffers from extremes of temperature, summer and winter.

"However," adds Robin Davis, of the London wine merchant Swig, "most wine bought is consumed within eight hours, so it hardly matters. It looks very attractive in a wine rack in the kitchen. Many people buy wine to drink within a month and it won't come to much harm in that time. The main thing to avoid is massive fluctuations in temperature. It's said the ideal temperature for wine is 55°F, or 13°C."

Serious but impoverished wine buffs who cannot afford to build a wine cellar (which can cost £5,000) do, Davis says, have another option.

"We use a chap who can build a closet in a spare room, with wine racks and humidifier, professionally insulated, for around £500 depending on size. It will be quite small but if you're going to be staying in the house for five



years, it's an investment."

Marion Kaempfert, daughter of the late band leader Bert Kaempfert, and her husband, the Danish jazz composer Allan Boisen, had a wine cellar built under the conservatory of their house in St John's Wood, London. Leaving it behind was one of their biggest regrets when the house was sold.

Max Robertson, the voice of radio tennis until his retirement, built a wine cellar to hold between 3,000 and 4,000 bottles at his former home in Wiltshire.

Most people, however, are more inclined to turn Down Under into a soundproof den for children, rather than a cellar full of Jacob's Creek. "The trouble with a lot of cellars is that people

found it convenient to put their oil fired boilers in there when central heating was installed," says Colin Swait, an estate agent with Hamptons. "It can ruin cellars for wine."

The Swaits, who when they moved into their home in found the cellar full of hundreds of empty champagne bottles, turned it into a kitchen. For the rest of us, just storing a case or two is the norm, and a wine rack is the answer.

There is no need to buy the old pine stick-and-peg self-assembly racks, a hangover from the Seventies. Furnishing designers have come up with some corks. Ocean, the mail order firm selling kitchenware, gifts, lighting and furniture, has some

of the smartest wine racks, including a wall-mounted "Wave" hanging rack made of beechwood, steamed to bend it into shape and held together with steel rivets. It holds eight bottles and costs £44.95. A beechwood standing rack, holding a dozen bottles is £54.95. Ocean's leather-strap hanging rack, inspired by a barber's shaving strap, will hold six bottles and costs £59, and a free-standing chrome-plated stainless steel rack, holding 16 bottles, is £59.95.

A 16-bottle chrome-plated rack from Presents Direct, a mail order company, is slightly cheaper at £55. Swig's elegant chrome, wall-mounted rack holds eight bottles and sells for £25.

Protect and imbibe: One of the new-look wine racks in chrome, from RTA Wine Rack

...AND THREE TO VIEW WITH CELLARS



Dene Hall, in Dene Park near Tonbridge in Kent, above, was converted into apartments six years ago. The one for sale now has the original entrance and reception rooms, along with a 23ft wine cellar. The three-bedroom apartment, with open fireplaces, woodstrip flooring and decorative friezes, also has a sports room and two garages. The communal grounds include a hard tennis court. £650,000 through Knight Frank (0171 629 8171)

Rosslyn Tower in Putney, south west London, left, is a double-fronted Grade II listed Victorian house with a steeple tower on the top and a wine cellar. The eight-bedroom house has a library, housekeeper's room and a music room with 15ft high ceilings. The drawing room was redesigned by Leonard Wyburd RA, who launched Liberty's furnishing and decoration studio. The garden has a lily pond, fountain and rose garden. Knight Frank is asking £1.25m (0171 629 8171).

The Old Parsonage at Higham, Suffolk, is Grade II listed and has a cellar with two storage areas, one with bins. The five-bedroom house, with two reception rooms, study and 14ft kitchen, has another store room on the first floor. Stone mullioned windows give views towards the church. There is a coach house - used a hay store, with two good loft rooms above - and tack room. The property has more than three acres of grounds and paddock. £395,000 through Bidwells (01284 767338).

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11/PROPERTY

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY
22 NOVEMBER 1997

SELLING PRIVATELY

How to get them knocking at your door – minus the estate agent

Ever thought about cutting out the estate agent's commission and selling your own home? It is possible, Fiona Brandhorst finds, but beware – there are many pitfalls as there are advantages for the novice.

When Pam Price decided to put her house on the market back in July she had no idea what it would be worth. Not only was she pleasantly surprised by the local estate agent's valuation but she was also not prepared for his optimism at being able to "sell it in a week".

Not one to turn down a challenge, Mrs Price decided to have a go at selling her house herself – if the house was that saleable she could save herself over £2,000 in commission and she felt she would be more in control. She chose to advertise in *Loot*, the free ads paper, which cost around £60 for a nine-week slot and included a sale board outside the property in a leafy street in Bromley, Kent.

"I made it obvious when people rang that I was only interested in serious buyers and I felt I could vet them more than an estate agent. I didn't want people who were just out for a ride on a Saturday afternoon." Viewing times were civilised. "I wasn't pressurised by anyone – if I knew my house was tidy I was happy, if not, I gave myself a couple of hours to clear up."

Twenty-five phone calls and 15 viewings later though, Mrs Price still hadn't had an offer and the ninth week was almost up. Then on the day she reluctantly instructed an agent, who claimed to have three serious buyers on his books, she had two offers from *Loot* readers. "The people the agent sent round didn't even have their properties on the market," she says.

Negotiations with the *Loot* buyers were held at different times over coffee. "I enjoyed the personal contact and could judge their intentions more than I would have been able to if the agent had been in charge. We agreed on a price just under the agent's suggested asking price."

Perhaps estate agents would argue that they could achieve more than the asking price, if there was more than one interested party, thus covering the fees a vendor would have to pay. Certainly Peter Blades, a partner in Barringtons estate agents in south Buckinghamshire, believes estate agents' experience within the market can't be beaten. "We know the best price a property can command and how to get it."

Private sales are also more likely to fall apart when the two sides become stressed and don't have a

third person to act as a go-between. Mr Blades cites this as one of the biggest problems with private sales. "The vendor and purchaser are open to misunderstandings; an agent can act as a buffer to smooth things over."

Without an agent in the wings vendors may turn to their solicitor to seek advice. If so, Peter Sibley a legal executive with Taylor Willcocks, sees potential problems. "It's not part of a solicitor's fee structure to enter into negotiations between the buyer and the seller."

Solicitors are also as defensive about legal hold-ups as estate agents are about commission charges. Mr Sibley suspects that most vendors and some estate agents do not fully understand what's involved in conveyancing and can make unreasonable demands on solicitors.

He should know – he used to be an estate agent and is "embarrassed" by some of the things he expected to happen. He admits that, when the pressure's on to exchange and complete contracts, having an agent working for you can be helpful. "If lenders require surveyors' reports on timber, damp or structural work, it's the estate agents – not the solicitors – who have the time and contacts to get things done quickly."

Keith Rudling did not try the hard sell when he advertised his two Hertfordshire artisan cottages through his local paper last year. He opened the front door to viewers and said with the curtness of Victor Meldrew: "What you see is what you get."

His first foray into DIY house-selling some years ago fell foul of the law on misrepresentation when he droily described the house he was selling as having a funeral-like parlour, dripping taps and broken stairs. The local newspaper refused to run the advertisement.

This time he advertised via a box number in the *Hertfordshire Mercury* and was surprised at the number of people who bothered to write to him for the handwritten property details. However, he was puzzled that most inquirers did not follow up their initial interest with a viewing. He eventually sold one of the cottages to the writer of the first letter.

A trip abroad hastened the need to sell the second cottage, so Mr Rudling turned to a local agent to find a buyer. Three potential purchasers came to nothing before the sale finally went through. Although Mr Rudling achieved a higher price with the agent, his solicitor charged him more for the extra work involved with the abortive sales.

Even in today's housing market where demand has outstripped supply for several months, the private seller needs to keep abreast of changes in case the sale falls

through after several weeks. What may have been a rising market three months previously can change due to seasonal or other economic factors. Private sellers may find themselves with an overpriced property and the cost of re-advertising.

For vendors going it alone, *Loot* has plenty of marketing advice including the cautious use of the well-known aromas of coffee and freshly baked cakes. Strangely, though, there's no mention of personal security. Stephen Smith from Bushells estate agents in south London is concerned about the safety of his

staff and clients. "I was working nearby when the estate agent Suzi Lamplugh went missing so I'm constantly reminding my staff to be on their guard." The majority of Bushells' viewings are accompanied by a member of staff and the firm will not arrange a visit without full details of the prospective purchaser.

Pam Price often showed couples around on her own with just their telephone numbers as a reference. "A couple of people knocked without an appointment, but I just told them to go and buy *Loot* for the de-

tails. They didn't come back."

Peter Blades is confident that DIY selling is only for the tough-skinned minority. "If you have an AI house, in an AI position that's gorgeous throughout then you'll probably sell it yourself, but if it's anything other than that, you'll need an agent." But Pam Price would do it all again with one proviso. "My house sold quickly because the market was right. I'd think twice if the market was dead."

If you want to sell your own home:

- Research the market well and have your home valued professionally.
- Advertise to the people most likely to buy your property.
- Instruct solicitors as soon as you decide to sell.
- Find out about the buying and selling process.
- Keep a cool head when the pressure mounts.

Loot (0171-372 7262); Barringtons (01753 892100); Taylor Willcocks Solicitors (0171-498 2244); Bushells (0181-299 1722)



Lucky strike: Pam Price sold without paying agents' fees, though she says her success came from the present high demand
Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid



PENNY JACKSON

New estates deserve a sporting chance

It isn't often that a passion for football is deployed to stir the collective conscience of the property world. But this week, Sir John Hall, entrepreneur and chairman of Newcastle United – at least for a few weeks more – treated all those who heard him deliver the annual Hampton Lecture to an unqualified endorsement of the value of sport in urban regeneration. Yet his own discovery of the passions football inspires have led him to see the game as a tool for personal as much as regional revitalisation. Sir John, the man behind the vast Metro Centre in Gateshead, spoke eloquently of "breaking into the cycle of decline" through sport. He would like to "prick the conscience" of other property entrepreneurs while recognising that at one time "cranes on sky-lines" were enough for him.

Before long there will be plenty of cranes at the Millennium site on the Greenwich Peninsula, part of a whole swathe of London that Sir John describes as being more deprived than anything he has seen in the North-east. Most people will know it as the spot where the camera starts at the beginning of EastEnders. So far, a shortlist of four consortia has been drawn up for the 32-acre Millennium village, the first phase in the development of the site which in size is equal to half of Kensington and most of Notting Hill. The village – 1,000 homes including social housing, a school, health facilities and shops – will not include large leisure areas. They form an important part of the masterplan for the whole though, according to Ralph Luck, English Partnerships development director for the Greenwich Peninsula. "We expect sport to engender a strong community spirit and especially around the focus of the school," he says. As yet, then, nothing to suggest a Peninsula football team might one day join the London clubs.

Somebody stands to gain from the Labour party's decision to downsize in Bury St Edmunds. Since it failed to take the seat at the general election, the party is leaving its prominent headquarters in the historic core of the town for smaller premises nearer the centre. The appropriately pink-painted Lansbury House has a Georgian facade, but many of the period features inside have not survived. At present it is laid out as offices and meeting rooms, but could be turned back into a private home. The guide price is £145,000, through Bedfords (01284 769999).

In recent months, the amount of property available to let has grown more quickly than the numbers of people looking to rent, Hamptons International letting division says. Penny Parr-Head, director, says that in July, August and September last year, there were on average 3.1 applicants in London for every property. That has dropped to 2.4 this year. In the country, the same quarter a year ago saw six applicants for every available property while the latest figures show that number to have dropped to 4.6 a property. However, in the third quarter of 1996, the country saw an 8 per cent drop in stock levels and they have not improved this year.

Why the euro may bring a bonus for home-buyers

Interest rates within those countries about to embark on the single currency adventure are dramatically lower than those in the UK. So when we join, mortgage rates will plunge, right? Quite possible, says Clifford German, but house prices will not soar.

Comparing property prices in sterling and euros is the least of the questions facing property owners in the UK if and when we join. At present the euro's forerunner, the ecu, is worth about 68p and the pound about 1.48 ecus. It is generally assumed that the pound is uncomfortably strong at present and after the last government's harrowing experience inside the ERM where the pound

was overvalued at the start, any future government would want to see sterling weaker before it is switched into euros. But whatever the eventual rate at which the transition is made, valuing UK assets in the common currency should be a straightforward process.

The impact on UK mortgage rates is likely to be much more important. UK interest rates are currently as much as 3 points above equivalent French and German rates, and UK rates are more likely to converge on European rates rather than the other way round.

It may well be another five years before a referendum is held to test public opinion and at least seven more years before we could adopt the euro, but if it does look like going ahead it is in everyone's interest that interest rates converge well before the actual point of entry.

At least half of today's home-owners will have moved

home by then, but most of them will still be making monthly payments on their home loans so mortgage rates are a matter of real concern and interest to most property owners.

Fortunately there is plenty of scope these days for borrowers to switch from fixed rates to variable rates of interest on their mortgages or vice versa, and to move their mortgages from one lender to another without actually moving home. But some recent research for Barclays Mortgages shows that 29 per cent of a sample of 900 people aged 20 and over would still look a standard variable rate mortgage if they move house. That means almost one borrower in three is still unaware of the attractions of discounted rate mortgages, cashbacks and various forms of fixed-rate mortgage.

Another 27 per cent would look for a cashback on their

new mortgage, and another 18 per cent would be attracted by a discount rate in the early stages of their new loan, usually for 12 months, sometimes spread over two or three years. Those should be irresistible bargains for borrowers who are willing to tie themselves to their new lender.

But these days most if not all cashback and discount-rate loans require borrowers to stay with the same lender after the incentive rate has lapsed, and pay standard variable rates for up to five years.

They usually impose substantial penalties for early repayment – usually within five years of taking out the loan, including the repayment of the cashback in full, or up to six months interest on discount mortgages (unless they move house and take out a new loan with the same lender, although this is usually at the standard rate). If the discounted rate is

stretched out over more than one year the penalties can apply for even longer.

A further 25 per cent would consider a short-term fixed rate, which even now in the week when more and more lenders are lifting their standard variable rates to 8.7 per cent there are plenty of fixed-rate offers that could cost them as much as 2 per cent less than the standard variable rate. Once again however most of these bargain fixed rate offers commit the borrower to staying with the same lender for some time after the fixed rate ends and reverts to the standard variable rate. Another 22 per cent are willing to take out mortgages at rates fixed for anything from five to ten years. Many of these borrowers are over 40s who are attracted by the prospect of a fixed repayment rate at today's mortgage rates, which are low by the levels of the last 10 to 20 years.

Some of these longer-term fixed rates incur no penalty for early repayment, but many of them do effectively lock borrowers in for the full term, and if the UK does join the single currency those rates could start

The once irresistible rise in the proportion of owners has stabilised. It is now more fashionable to rent than it once was

to look quite expensive. Looking further into the implications of a single currency, many borrowers are already asking what effect a euro-mortgage would have on property prices. On past experience a secular trend to lower interest rates, reducing the monthly cost of servicing a loan, should encourage borrowers to bid up property prices. But UK property prices

are already relatively much more expensive as a percentage of average earnings than they are on the continent, and it is hard to see how the differential could justifiably widen further. In fact a significant number of our sample think a euro-mortgage would make it easier for them to up sticks and work on the continent. That might be a kind of wish fulfillment, but emigration of a significant scale reducing the demand for UK property cannot be ruled out.

It is also worth noting that the once irresistible rise in the proportion of home-owners in the UK has stabilised around 66 per cent over the past eight years, and it is now much more trendy to rent a home than it was when most tenants lived in council houses. That has reduced demand for owner occupation and helped to keep property prices down since the Lawson boom collapsed.

Most important however is the combination of planning restrictions on building new homes in the UK, and the long-running tax advantages of home ownership. Compared with the continent, where 100 per cent mortgages and tax concessions on mortgage interest are less common and stamp duty is much higher, British borrowers have had it very easy. Although planning restrictions are unlikely to be abandoned if they are relaxed, and property is forced to bear a bigger share of the tax burden, home-owners could be pressured to prize their pensions above their property over the next decade.

'The Independent' has published a free 27-page 'Guide to Mortgages' by Nic Cicuiti, the paper's award-winning Personal Finance Editor. The guide, sponsored by Barclays Mortgages, is available by calling 0800 535691. Or fill in the coupon on page 4.

